FANNY FITZ-YORK;

Heiress of Tremorne.

IN THREE VOLUMES.



BY

ANN RYLEY.

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FANNY FITZ-YORK.



CHAP. I.

BENEVOLENCE—USURPATION—A LITERARY MORSEL—AND UNWELCOME VISITORS.

LADY ANN could not have found a more fit person to second her benevolent plans than Mr. Strickland; for, added to her own goodness of heart, and liberality of sentiment, his mercantile concerns gave him an opportunity of more useful and essential service, than could have arisen from mere rank or property. The stranger, under such patronage, might become a useful member of the commonwealth, and make amends to society for violating her rights, and trampling upon the laws which guard them; under

such protection, every good propensity would be nurtured, and human frailty delivered from the evils of temptation.

The worthy merchant concluded a discourse fraught with benevolence, with a strict charge respecting the health of his protegée, and an assurance of useful employment, when that was established. As the young man was rising to take leave, Lady Milford and Fanny entered the room. Her Ladyship started—Fanny blushed—and the cause of their emotion, staggering under the combined effects of surprise, shame, and remaining weakness, would have fallen to the ground, had he not caught hold of the chair from which he had just risen.

The Countess having attentively perused the countenances of the assembled group with a greatness of mind becoming her se and situation, thus addressed the culprit:—

"Young man, from me you have nothing to fear. I read in your tell-tale countenanc contrition for the past, and I anticipate th rewards, a return to virtue cannot fail produce in a mind sensibly alive to form

intended plans, may strengthen your fortitude, and enable you to defeat cunning and stratagem, aided by those powerful auxiliaries, ambition and a love of power."

"I am fully aware," replied Lord Moseley, "of the plans in agitation, and should have avoided the party altogether, had I apprehended any relaxation of that firmness which has hitherto been proof against the attacks of the Earl of Milford, and my Lord Mountcastle. But it requires stronger arguments than any hitherto used, to convince my reason against the evidence of facts, which, in themselves, carry demonstration."

"Reason and argument, my dear George," said the Countess laughing, "are weapons seldom used by either of the noble lords in question. Positive assertion, delivered in a high tone, is the substitute for one—and sophistry for the other. Sound reason and deep discussion are at present on the other side; and if they did not think you possessed strong oratorical powers, believe me, they would let you sink into oblivion, if that were your wish. It is not a single vote they want—

these a minister can always command from the imbecile tools whose intellects are below the common standard of men—but a person who can support their tottering administration with real ability in the house; and whose *reported* speeches may dazzle and confound the multitude, and make them believe that war is necessary, and starvation no evil.

Lord Moseley's attachment to his lovely cousin was now become so obvious, that Lady Ann cautioned him, through the medium of Lady Milford, against encouraging it by the frequency of his visits; but her Ladyship, far from agreeing with her sister-in-law on the necessity of separating the young couple, thought the union would be a desirable family arrangement; "and though" she continued, "Fanny does not possess much worldly wealth—she is gifted with mental attainments beyond the generality of her sex, and these are amply equivalent to the riches which will one day centre in Moseley."

This sort of reasoning was lost upon the mother of Fanny. She felt too much ju

indignation at the illiberal behaviour of her kindred, to suffer a daughter of Fitz-York to become more nearly connected with them, even had Fanny's inclinations pointed that way; that they did not, was matter of congratulation—for her child's happiness was very near the mother's heart, and would have received no check from parental authority, save the one in question. Want of rank or riches, where the object appeared worthy, would have involved no impediment; for every day's experience convinced her, that the first failed to make people amiable, and that the latter was often concomitant with vulgarity and meanness. Lady Ann fancied, in the early part of their acquaintance, that *Mr.* Moseley would have been the object of Fanny's preference; and he was, as far as her knowledge of him extended, unexceptionable; but though he frequently joined their parties, and was as assiduous as ever; the young lady received him with such unembarrassed good humour, and treated him so like a favourite brother, that a more ten-

der attachment seemed little likely to take place.

On the day which involved Mrs. Stokes's in such merited disgrace, her messenger and confidential friend returned from a successful expedition. At least, so far successful, that he brought a good-looking, but very conse-quential young man, whom he chose to call Frederick Leigh, but who, in fact, was a nephew of his own. He had been on the Continent in the capacity of valet; and by the help of a good memory, and a tolerable address, had acquired an easy impudence which, with his uncle, and people of the same description, passed for polished ele-gance and fashionable manners.

Brierly left London with a determination to prosecute his search faithfully and dili-gently; but Tom Smith accidentally cross-ing his path, proved a source of temptation too great for his small stock of virtue to withstand—and, for the first time, he argued him on the improbability of finding the son of Mrs. Stokes, with no better clue than his own ingenuity, and the flattered portrait

child; probably unlike at the time—but ow from length of years—diseases incident o youth, and casualties, perhaps, totally dissimilar. With arguments like these, he reconciled his mind to the imposition; and ought, if money could be obtained from ederick Grosvenor's executors, there would e no great harm in sharing it.

Full of this scheme, he spent the week, at ought to have been employed in research, in fully explaining to, and instructing 'om Smith, in the fundamentals necessary the imposition; not omitting his signaure to a moiety of whatever should be btained through their joint industry. Mrs. tokes' imprisonment was rather matter of oy than surprise, for he had pretty well read er character; and her share in the nefarious ansaction, convinced him more fully, that would hesitate at no means to further plans; and, by giving bail on the morrow, ould lay her under unreturnable obligat His first business, the succeeding day, or o wait upon her with a face of con-Sment, and a tongue of hypocricy; for

Brierly could "smile, and smile, and be villain."

Tom Smith, as we shall, for some tim call him Frederick Leigh, accompanied hi Preceptor to the place of captivity; and wi well-acted grimace, played the part of dutiful and an affectionate son.

Mrs. Stokes had recourse to her ol manœuvre, a fainting fit; because no othe means could so effectually set forth her ex treme sensibility; and to have been other wise than affected at the recovery of her *long lost—often-deplored*—and almost despaire of, Frederick, would have shewn a degre of vulgar indelicacy, quite incompatible wit the character she was ambitious of acquiring

Brierly's principles were well known, an appreciated in the vicinity of Bow-street but being an housekeeper, and nominal following a respectable profession, his bail received—Mrs. Stokes carried off in triur —and joyfully welcomed by her nieces; o dreaded nothing so much as being sent k into Devonshire, a measure not to be avied,

if their aunt's confinement was more than temporary.

The conversation now turned upon her dear Frederick's adventures, and the striking resemblance he bore to his late noble father. The former were as completely romantic, as a fertile imagination, aided by no common assurance, could make them; and, at every review of the latter, Brierly smiled, and declared it a favourable omen; as it would prevent every suspicion of imposture, and validate the young gentleman's claims beyond controversy.

The traveller, in relating his history, took the happy medium between independence and servitude; for, unable to substantiate his claims to fortune, he was equally averse to owning the degradation of a livery. Accordingly, we find him the travelling *companion* of Lord Portman; the identical nobleman, whose hair he condescended to comb; and who gratefully acknowledged that nobody understood the tie of a cravat, or could negotiate an intrigue, equal to Tom Smith.

As no time was to be lost, in making provision for the five hundred pounds, allowing it was proved to have been in her possession; Mrs. Stokes thought it expedient to prosecute her attack upon the Earl of Milford without delay. But as her last letter lay unanswered, and they heard nothing further from Mr. Archer, she determined to try the effect of a personal application, accompanied by the elegant youth, whose prepossessing figure, and fashionable manners, could not fail, she said, of making a favourable impression upon his uncle, and would quite captivate his aunts, if their high mightinesses would condescend to give them the meeting. Of this, Mrs. Stokes had her doubts; but that nothing might be left undone, to forward so desirable an event, she wrote two similar letters, and sent a porter to Berkeley Square, with orders to bring an answer from Lady Mountcastle, and to learn the residence of Lady Ann Fitz-York.

Lord Milford had called upon his brother peer, to confer upon the means most likely

to subdue George's stubbornness, (as he pleased to call it,) but found the family still assembled at their morning repast; and ere the two statesmen could retire, an ill-folded letter, with a worse spelt direction, but a blazing seal, was handed on a splendid salver, by the gentleman in waiting to Lady Mount-castle.

First appearances are frequently decisive, from "the human face divine," to the mere envelope which contains the effusions of human intellect. Beauty and proportion, are letters of recommendation, whether applied to living, or inanimate, objects; and as Hannah Stokes' note exhibited neither one nor the other, disgust was the only sensation visible upon the countenance of Lady Mount-castle.

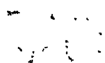
The man still held the waiter, on which lay the unfortunate epistle;—his Lady turned her eyes from the innocent object of her dislike, to her Lord—her brother—and her offspring; the two former appeared insensible to her mortification; but Moseley and his sister, as soon as their Lady Mother's

observation was withdrawn, could, with difficulty, conceal their risibility. At length the bearer, in a somewhat hesitating manner, ventured to turn the paper, and displayed a handsome coat of arms, impressed upon the best Dutch sealing wax, and that not melted with a sparing hand.

This proved corroborative of what I before advanced, respecting appearances; and decided Lady Mountcastle's plan of operation. The letter was opened without again reverting to the direction; but her Ladyship's first view of that arouzed, placid, cool indifference, compared to the rage which flashed from her eyes, when the fatal contents became known.

Passion—insulted pride—offended dignity—and mortified vanity, caused such a variety of emotions, though all tending to the same point, that speech, at first denied, returned with increased strength, from the momentary suspension; and Hannah Stokes' name was repeated with a loudness and asperity, that startled her hearers.

"Hannah Stokes!" repeated Lord Mil-



ford, with mortified recollection. "And pray who is Hannah Stokes?" enquired Lord Mountcastle. "A soi-disant letter-writer," said his Lady, whom the Sunday schools have educated, on purpose, I believe, to torment *me*. I do not see to what end such people are taught to read and write at all; and if I were the Regent, Bell and Lancaster should be sent out of the country as public evils, rather than encouraged to propagate knowledge amongst a class of society, who are much happier in their ignorance.'

"I suppose that impudent woman's letter is on the old subject?" observed Lord Milford.

"Yes! but with added provocation, for she now threatens your Lordship with an interview, accompanied by her booby brat. But read it Moseley, if you can decypher her vile scrawl, for the bare *attempt* would choak *me*. George, smiling, obeyed, and with scarcely-suppressed laughter, read as follows:—

Mi ladi,

i Did miself The onner Of riting to lord milford sum Time agoe. Tho he was not Pullite enuf To notis it To *mee*, he probbabli hinformed Your ladiship of the Paticklers. mi son his arived, and too morrow mornin at 12 O clok i shal ave the onner In person of hintrodoocing im too is Nobel Hunkle, & also your ladiship & ladi An fits Yorke, if you condesend To give hus the Meetin. frederick his An Hellegant and accomplishd Yooth, an Wil, as i before Tould is Hunkle, doo Creddit To anny Happointment, owever Helevated you May Think propper To proccure for im; But If parshallity does not misleed me, i think The dipplomatick line Best Sooted To is Tallents; owever That i leeve intierly to Mi lord & Your ladiships. i shud not thus ave Trasspast Uppon Y[r] ladiships Time, But from a Conshusness that mi Tallents ar more conspeckuus In riting than speekin, i ham like the greet haddison In That respect, hoo Y[r] ladiship Remember atempted To speek In the ouse Of comons, But cud not make hout a

Single centense. Yr ladiship need not Trubble yr self To hinform ladi An fits Yorke Of The meetin, For i ave ritten to her ladiship By the Same Mesinger And remane dear maddam

Yr ladiships sincearly Devoted
frend & Servent
Hannah Stokes."

South Hamton St
March th 21st 1812.

"Quite Addisonian," continued George folding up the letter; "but I hope she does herself justice, for if her conversible powers equal her epistolary ones, your Lordship will be borne down by a torrent of eloquence irresistible."

"It may prove a torrent of impertinence and presumption that will sweep away even the *appearance*, or forbearance, of good manners:" replied the Earl; "for if her discourse bear upon diplomacy, I shall laugh in her face; and if she insist upon our owning the lad, I shall order my servants to turn them both out of doors. I would refuse to see the woman; but that there appears a persevering impudence about her, that nothing short of a decisive interview

can disarm. As to her pretended claims upon Frederick's estate, those my lawyer has under contemplation, and I doubt not they will prove as nugatory as her son's pretensions to genius or talent."

"Does your Ladyship mean to be of the party?" asked Lord Moseley.

Mortification had hitherto kept Lady Mountcastle silent,—a circumstance not very usual,—but the mention of her joining a party which involved Hannah Stokes, roused her choler, and, with more than her accustomed haughtiness, she replied,

"The question answers itself. In such society Lady Mountcastle *cannot* be seen; and, but that I know the thoughtless levity of your manner, I should feel indignant at the bare surmise. From Hannah Stokes it might be expected, because her ignorance and impudence are upon a level; but Lord Moseley could never suspect his mother of such a degradation. Ring the bell, and enquire if her messenger waits."

The servant replied in the affirmative, and that he was ordered to wait for an answer.

"Then order him from *me*," replied her Ladyship, "to take back the letter, and say, there is none other required."

Mrs. Stokes, nothing daunted by the rudeness of Lady Mountcastle, or the more gentlewoman-like refusal of Lady Ann, went to Milford-house, accompanied by her supposed son and Brierly, and was instantly shewn into the Earl's library; who had also summoned *his* man of business, rather to witness the conversation, than to decide upon the legality of Mrs. Stokes' claim, with which he determined not to interfere, but let the law take its course.

Mrs. Stokes, I think I have before observed, felt her own littleness in the company of her superiors. The dignified person of Lord Milford, and the haughty stateliness with which he *sat* to receive her, made her shrink into nothing; and caused a sensation or desire, that some friendly intervention would hide him from her view, or that she had never embarked in an undertaking, which subjected her to the pain and mortification his presence inspired.

Frederick Grosvenor, alias Tom Smith, had a bold effrontery in his manner, a self-possession, which, in the presence of those greatly his superiors in birth and education, but of milder and more timid habits, cloaked his native meanness, and passed for ease and knowledge of the world. But Lord Milford's austere demeanor, and a consciousness of his elevated rank, converted the naturally confident stare into a look of sheepishness; his eyes, usually elevated above their natural level, appeared to be contemplating the figures on a beautiful Brussel's carpet; and his limbs, designed by the great modeller to represent ease, now assumed an uncouth awkwardness, and either dangled by his side, or shrunk from the support of a body, usually elastic and erect.

The Attorney, originally possessing neither ease nor elegance, was the least transformed of the party. For having *ostensibly* no *interest* in the *meeting*, cunningly prevented his shewing any in the *result;* so that the only difference perceptible in him, was a bow of servility, that nearly touched

the ground, and a sycophantic smile, which imposed upon nobody but himself.

For several moments, which seemed an age to the new comers, a determined silence prevailed; at length Mrs. Stokes ventured to stammer out her son's name, and to hope his Lordship would receive him as a descendant of the late Honourable Mr. Grosvenor.

"I have *received* you *both*," replied his Lordship, "against my will; but if your hopes point further, they are destined to meet disappointment.—The Honourable Mr. Grosvenor might or might not be the father of your child; I dare say you have no certainty to fix upon; but suppose he were, have you the presumption to think our noble family will contaminate itself, by publicly acknowledging a base-born progeny? As to your pretended claims upon the late Mr. Grosvenor's property, if they are legally proved, they will be allowed; though you must give me leave to observe, you have no credulous fools to dupe with a well-told tale or a bond forged for the purpose."—

"Forged, my Lord!"—

"Yes!—You have doubtless *heard* of such things, and theory *may* have produced *practice*. We shall, at any rate, act as if we were assured of it, till proof, more positive than mere assertion, convince us to the contrary."—

"My Lord," replied the subtle Brierly, "I beg pardon for interrupting your Lordship; but give me leave to observe, that Mrs. Stokes, my client, is a lady well known in the circles of fashion, in the neighbourhood where she resides; and as much above the action your Lordship alludes to, as incapable, by sex and situation, of putting it in practice."

The Attorney's defence, short as it was, infused courage into the minds of Mrs. Stokes and the young man. The latter thought it incumbent upon him to advance something in defence of his supposed mother, and therefore took up the discourse where Brierly dropped it. "Yes, my Lord! I take upon me to say, that my mother—the lady of Major Stokes—is as much above an act of

meanness, and as incapable of imposing upon your Lordship as I am."—

" There I give you full credit. You are *alike incapable*, and by the same rule of argument, *equally* objects of *suspicion*. The actions of one, will be the actions of both; and what the mother does, the son and his agent will doubtless justify."

" We must be justified, my Lord," vociferated Mrs. Stokes, " in a court of law, if your Lordship will not allow mine and my dear Frederick's claims, without having recourse to those means. My friend, Mr. Brierly, whom I brought as an amicable mediator, will, if we are forced to the measure, see us righted, and convince your Lordship, when too late, that an accommodation is less expensive than a law suit."

Mr. Archer, the Earl's solicitor, had hitherto remained silent. Unfortunately for Mrs. Stokes, he was present during the whole of her examination in Bow-street, and when she had finished her last well-turned period, thus addressed her. " Mrs. Stokes, had not you better settle the cause wherein you are

defendant, ere you embark in another with the same family as plaintiff?"

"What mean you?"

"I mean, that Lady Milford's claims, in the case of robbery, for which you were arraigned at Bow-street, should be answered, before you attack her Lord, or you may find impediments and difficulties, even your friend Mr. Brierly cannot help you out of. My Lord, you look amazed; but this lady appeared yesterday before Mr. G——, if not as the actual culprit, at least as being a receiver of the property, feloniously stolen from Lady Milford some weeks back. Her Ladyship, from misplaced tenderness and compassion, refused to prosecute, on condition that the property be refunded; this has partially been complied with; but there yet remains a five hundred pound bank note unaccounted for, which, if the truth were known, Mrs. Stokes retains to carry on her suit against your Lordship, that she may fight you with your own weapons."

This detail was as unwelcome as unexpected. The mortification of a public expo-

sure—to be arraigned for the perpetration of a crime she never had even in contemplation, aided by the consciousness of her culpability, as actual possessor of property so acquired, too much occupied her thoughts at the time for names or titles to make any impression; otherwise, it is highly probable, Hannah Stokes would not have had temerity enough to enter the house of a person, between whom and herself there could be no reciprocity, either of feeling or interest. Brierly, seeing his client unprepared for an immediate reply, took up the discourse. "The bill in question will be proved never to have been in the possession of Mrs. Stokes; no jury would give it against her, upon mere presumption, because that would be entirely in her favour; for after a purse has been in the hands of an highwayman, he must have a convenient conscience, indeed, who would swear to the contents, when found upon a third person."

Mrs. Stokes thought her lawyer an oracle; and was preparing to second him, when the Earl requested his solicitor to beg Lady

Milford's attendance. Her Ladyship was at that moment in earnest and confidential discourse with Mr. Strictland; the business in question formed part of it, and the messenger no sooner mentioned Mrs. Stokes and her son Frederick Leigh, than he yielded to her Ladyship's solicitations, and accompanied her to the library.

When they were seated, Lady Milford, with her usual urbanity, requested the strangers to sit likewise; but a look from her Lord, repulsively petrifying, completely counteracted the good-humoured invitation, and the abashed trio retained their humiliating position.

"Lady Milford," exclaimed the Earl, in a tone little less commending than that in which he addressed his menials, "this person—*Mistress* Stokes, I think she calls herself, has been, or is in possession of, the valuables you were robbed of. Although you refused to acknowledge the amount of your loss, when we heretofore canvassed the subject; I now insist, as a means of recovering them, that you explicitly confess the

number and value of the bills, you so imprudently committed to the safety of a silken bag; not inappositely called a *redicule*, to denominate the light in which we should view the wearer of such a preposterous apology."

"I agree with your Lordship, once in my life, that redicules are ridiculous things; that nothing but absurdity planned them, or sanctions their use; but, as you have not unfrequently condemned, what you are pleased to call my singularities, I thought you would, at least, have given me credit for conformity in this instance. With respect to the confession your Lordship requires; I cannot be correct, either in the number or value of the smaller bills; but one of five hundred pounds, I can safely refer to; and as the others were comparatively inconsequential, I shall not, unavailingly, tax my memory, or subject the present possessor to inconvenience from error or mistake."

A silence followed Lady Milford's declaration, which was interrupted by Mr. Strictland enquiring if the young man was Mrs.

Stokes's son? To which she answered in the affirmative.—"Your only son!"

"Yes! my only son, Frederick Leigh; the sole descendant of the late honourable Mr. Grosvenor; and a young man whom his father's relations might be proud to acknowledge. He has been the tour of Germany and Italy, as companion, and confidential friend, to Lord Portman; who, I have no doubt, will use his interest, either to bring him into the house, or to have him sent out in a diplomatic capacity; for which the young man has talents, though I, his mother, say it, that will reflect honour on his patrons, and the country which gave him birth."

An emphatic, "Pshaw!" from Lord Milford, put a stop to Mrs. Stokes's harangue, or there is no foreseeing whither ambition would have carried her. The Treasury Bench would scarcely have bounded her hopes, so soaring was her genius, when engaged upon a favourite topic; and Mr. Strictland's question, avowedly made as though he had an interest in the answer; produced an artificial courage, which, for the moment,

made her forget her own insignificance, and also that, in the presence of Lords and Ladies, folks of plebeian mould should scarcely venture to think, or open their lips to inhale the common air; much less presume to utter expressions, for which there was no precedent in her own experience.

The Privy Counsellor's interjection—which his Lady thought a rude interruption to the excusable eulogium of a partial mother, she endeavoured to soften by a good-humoured smile; at the same time observing, "that Mr. Leigh might be rendered an honourable member of society, and essentially serve his country, without having a seat as its representative at home, or a delegation abroad; and that if he really possessed those talents ascribed to him, she hoped Lord Milford, for the sake of his late brother, would place him in a situation, where they would be usefully and profitably employed."

The Earl seldom listened to advice—never from a woman—and this was, of all others, the most repugnant to his feelings. With a look of much asperity, he replied, "Lady Milford, your company was not requested

as an adviser or mediator, but simply to answer a question; that done, you have liberty to retire. When we want your counsel, you will have due notice; till when, I would recommend taciturnity and reserve, as most befitting your sex and station. As to these people, who have unaccountably intruded themselves into our habitation, and maliciously robbed us of our leisure, I hope they will be contented with the present mischief. Time is of no comparative value to them; to us, its worth is incalculable, and cannot be wasted in listening to every interloper who chooses to fancy he has a claim upon our leisure, or our patience."

The trio, who found nothing was to be expected from negotiation, retired, with looks more mortified and sheepish, if possible, than those with which they entered. Lady Milford, and her worthy friend, also left the room, when he communicated his motives for questioning Mrs. Stokes; and also entered into a detail, which astonished the Countess, and filled her with added reverence for the characters of Lady Ann, and the benevolent relater.

CHAP. II.

POLITICAL CHARACTERS—THE MYSTERY EXPLAINED—SCHEMES TO RAISE MONEY—AND A MATRIMONIAL DIFFERENCE.

The dinner assemblage, at Milford House, consisted of all the ministerial party, and several members of both houses, whose opinions were *conveniently* coincident. The greater part of them were strangers to Lord Moseley, but chose, courtier-like, to profess as much good will, and to have his interest as much at heart, as though ties of blood, or those nearer ones of friendship, and reciprocity of sentiment, united them. But George was not to be decoyed by such flimsy, chaff-like manœuvres; they rather helped to retard, than forward the schemes in agitation; whilst a contrary conduct might have deceived him into a hope, that sincerity was at least professed, though the reality might be doubtful.

One noble Lord gave him hopes of a share in the administration;—another, not less eloquently, complimented him on his talents for negotiation, and wished we had such a minister in America. A third would trumpet forth his merit at Carlton House; and declared the Regent such an absolute judge of talent, and on all occasions so ready to appreciate it, that he had no doubt of his superseding that stubborn and inflexible politician, whose only merit was consistency, and the lustre of that was diminished, by his constant support of a weak cause.

"Now we are on this subject," continued the noble speaker, "how shall we account for the contradiction in that man's character? I have just now called him stubborn and inflexible—and so he is, and always has been, to our overtures; yet, in private life, he is the least so of any man in existence. Pliability there, characterizes him even to a fault, and to the great detriment of all his dependants; for he has not firmness enough to refuse a supplication, though refusal would be mercy, compared to the

bitter disappointment in store for those, whose petitions or requests are forgotten the moment his word is passed to assist or relieve them." Much more discourse, generally, to S——n's disadvantage, resulted from this observation, but as it is no way relevant to the object of the present meeting, we shall return to the attack.

One right honourable commoner declared they wanted just such an orator in the lower house, and that no inducement should be withheld, if he would join their cause. Another honourable member, but who was in a fair way of becoming right honourable, said, " youthful speakers, with your Lordship's person and deportment, even when their abilities rank below mediocrity, are highly imposing; but when joined to great oratorical powers, must be invincible—and if your Lordship will condescend to join our phalanx, we shall not shrink, as we sometimes feelingly do, when a Whitbread—a Romilly—a Brougham—a Tierney—a Sheridan—a Burdett, run the changes upon sinecures, reversions, or reform; because we

should feel a confidence in your powers; a certainty of some rational reply—some solid argument, which, I am sorry to say, we frequently feel the want of."

"Aye! I'll be d——nd if we don't" echoed the member for Sussex. "The opposition are so c——ed queer, they laugh at all our arguments, and once called the question during one of my best speeches." "That was very hard, Jack," replied Mr. C., "they might have had patience to hear you out, for you seldom trouble the house long."

"Another time they called me to order for just slipping out an oath—when I'll be c——ed if I could help it, they were so d——nd provoking."

Lord Milford, who never condescended to swear, or to be, as he himself thought, trifling—there were people ill-natured enough to say, his discourse never amounted to any thing else—now interrupted the current of conversation, in order to bring it back to its old channel. "I have no doubt, my Lords and Gentlemen," said he, "that Lord Moseley is fully sensible of the high honour your

notice confers, and that he is patriot enough to join those ranks, who orally fight the battles of his country, against the disaffected crew, who, scorning subordination and kingly power, would welcome Buonaparte, and rejoice at any event that afforded them a scramble for money, which, almost to a man, they want, or a chance for power, which, not the most moderate amongst them would refuse. The brawlers, my Lords and Gentlemen, have, generally speaking, no stake in the country—and are, therefore, incompetent to judge what is best for her interest; but when an independent man steps forward, we have confidence in what he says, and are satisfied with what he does—because he will neither say or do any thing, but what is for the safety and glory of the land which gave him birth, and affords him ease and competence. You, Lord Moseley, have too just notions of right and wrong, not to feel the force of my argument, and to apply it to your future conduct."

An universal silence succeeded his Lordship's speech. The general attention was

fixed upon George, and perceiving that a reply was expected, he rose with dignity and grace, and in return to the applause of a few junior members, gently bowed his head "I shall address my short reply, particularly to you, my Lord Milford—although I wish it to be received as a general answer to all the advances and complimentary hints, thrown out by the noble Lords, and honourable gentlemen present. That I am not a vain man, even my adversaries allow; but it must be something more contemptible than mere vanity, that could identify the character thus flatteringly drawn, and say, 'I am that man!'

"To be a member of the present administration, would revolt my feelings, and be in direct opposition to the principles I have professed, since I was capable of rational thought or action. Could I, indeed, be indifferent to the miseries of my fellow-creatures — miseries brought on by war, which, I am told, there are men base enough to promote and extend, to serve their own purposes of ambition, unheeding the distresses

and poverty entailed upon thousands.—Could I say to the ruined tradesman or mechanic, you are reduced to pauperism, but that is of little consequence whilst I am wallowing in riches—could I turn a deaf ear to the wailings of the widow and the fatherless, and laugh at their sorrows, because none of my family bled in the war myself had caused—could I be an unconcerned instrument in levying taxes, oppressive only to the middling and poorer classes, whilst places, pensions, and reversions added to my own, before splendid inheritance—could I do all this—and when my country was tottering on the verge of ruin, persuade the people by sophistry and well-turned periods, that we never were more prosperous, more happy, or more decidedly victorious—though shame, defeat, and dismay, attended all our movements—when, I repeat, I can say, and do all this with an unblushing front, and an heart that throbs for individual, but not general distress; I shall gladly join the party who seem to breathe a different atmosphere from the people at large, and whose powers of

vision are unable to discern objects in their true colours."

Lord Moseley having with modest firmness delivered his sentiments, made a passing bow, and stepping into a hackney coach, drove to Lombard Street—where he amused the domestic circle with a full, though, perhaps, caricatured account, of the honourable, and right honourable company he had just quitted. Meantime he was not spared in their animadversions. One blamed his father and uncle, for not more clearly comprehending the young Lord's character, which would have prevented the possibility of making overtures so little likely, in his present frame of mind, to prove effective. Another called him a self-opiniated, headstrong boy, whose enthusiasm time would cool, and most likely produce an utter change of sentiment; till when, he must follow the delusions of what he doubtless called patriotism, but which was, in reality, nothing more than the workings of imagination upon an inexperienced mind, moulded into perfection by popular applause.

"Popular applause is a c——ed *humbug*," exclaimed the member of swearing notoriety, "and only a cover for disaffection. Are not those who seek it, always finding fault, and pretending to discover grievances where none exist? What I say is, if they don't like the country, d——n 'em let 'em leave it, and find a better if they can." "Bravo, Jack!" exclaimed the son of Mrs. H.——* "You are of the true *Bull* breed, and *John* never had a more devoted son."

Lord Milford experienced much mortification from his nephew's impenetrability; but still there were measures to be tried, which he thought irresistible. Bribery he had frequently found effectual, where argument failed; and though Lord Moseley declared against places and reversions; many others had done the same, and afterwards found them, not merely digestible, but extremely palatable, not only useful, but very convenient.

The following morning, as the family in

* This lady was formerly a provincial actress, but now enjoys a pension from Government of 500l. a year.

Lombard Street were seated at a late breakfast, Mr. Gaskell arrived; and after partaking of the sociable meal, retired with Lady Ann to her dressing-room; where he was put in full possession of the awkward and indelicate situation in which his daughters had been placed; not omitting the ensign's culpability, and actual imprisonment, or his sister-in-law's disgraceful examination.

Mr. Gaskell felt as a father for the situation of his undutiful girls, and determined to lose no time in removing them from the protection of a woman, whose want of prudence he always condemned—but whose conduct in the present instance, rendered her criminal, as well as thoughtless. The ensign, he assured Lady Ann, had already drawn upon him to so alarming an amount, that he had peremptorily refused to accept any more bills; nor would he release him from his present merited confinement, until well assured that reformation would follow. As to Mrs. Stokes, he should not interfere at all in her concerns; he was, unfortunately, and miserably, connected with one of the

family—but neither felt it a duty, nor was he inclined to hamper himself with another.

Her Ladyship perfectly coincided with her worthy neighbour's determination to remove his daughters, but hazarded no opinion respecting the other points, though she tacitly thought his resolutions prudent and proper.

That no delay might still further disgrace the Miss Gaskells, he determined to leave London with them the same evening. Meantime, he visited the place of his son's confinement, and after reading him a parental lecture, left him without hopes of present relief; and those of hereafter, so entirely dependent upon repentance and future good conduct—that the people who best knew his wayward and perverse disposition, would have doomed him to perpetual imprisonment, unless liberty could have been obtained through less unlikely means.

From the prison he went directly to Southampton-street, and without ceremony was ushered into a room, where sat Mrs. Stokes, his two daughters, Brierly, and Tom

Smith; the latter familiarly seated between the Miss Gaskells on a sofa. A violent burst of laughter preceded the entrance of their highly-offended father; but without noticing *that*, or the party, and with as much sternness as he was capable of assuming, he ordered his daughters to prepare immediately for leaving a place, which they had entered contrary to his express commands; and where their imprudent conduct, the wickedness of their brother, and the behaviour of one, who was old enough to know the consequence of retaining goods the avowed property of another, had brought shame and disgrace upon a family, who never knew either, until fatally connected with those who set shame and public opinion at defiance.

Mrs. Stokes, during this address, sat bridling in her chair; whilst her friend and adviser, awed by the respectability of Mr. Gaskell's appearance, and fearful of having his own conduct too nicely investigated, rose, and respectfully handed a chair to the unwelcome intruder. The seat, and the bow

which accompanied it, were, however, alike unheeded; for, turning once more to his daughters, he, in a still more peremptory manner, commanded them to lose no time in preparation, for that in one hour he should bring a coach to convey them to Charing-cross.

Mrs. Stokes, with wonderful command of voice and feature, hoped her *dear brother* would at least postpone his journey for a single night, that she might endeavour to lessen his resentment against herself for bringing Priscilla and Grace to London, contrary to his wish; and also explain other matters, in which she wanted his counsel and advice.

Mr. Gaskell disliked Mrs. Stokes as much as it was in his nature to dislike any thing in female form. But there was a yielding softness in his nature, a desire to do good, which at all times counteracted individual resentment, and prompted him to relieve the distresses even of an enemy. To this placability the worthy man yielded, on condition that Mrs. Stokes could satisfactorily account

for the forwardness of the young man, who appeared to be on so familiar a footing with the Miss Gaskells, and that they cheerfully consented to quit London on the morrow. Both these conditions being agreed to, the young women retired for the avowed purpose of preparation, and the men to forward their own views by consultation.

No sooner were they left alone, than Mrs. Stokes, with well-dissembled softness, confessed her weakness in complying with the wishes of her nieces, in contradiction to his will; "but," she continued, "the remembrance of my own juvenile desires, and the little actual harm there appeared in bringing them to London rather than Bath, urged a compliance, which I now feel to be morally indefensible; inasmuch as deception is at all times wrong, and one falsehood so naturally begets another, that there is no foreseeing where the evil may stop. But I am justly punished for my error, by a tissue of circumstances so unexpected and perplexing, that without your aid, my *dear brother*, I know not how to extricate myself. You

have heard of the robbery, and its consequences: there, too, I have to confess weakness and error; but, I trust, no actual guilt; for, had the strange purse accidentally lain in my path, I should have scorned to appropriate its contents. But receiving it in exchange for my own, and from a person who could have fewer claims upon it; I thought myself, from the surprise of the moment, in some measure justified in its retention, particularly as no advertisement, no enquiry of any kind, followed the robbery. But now comes on my perplexity. My nieces can bear witness, that every thing the purse contained has been restored; yet a further claim is made of five hundred pounds, which, doubtless, the highwaymen disposed of long before I came into possession; but as I cannot prove this, except upon the aforesaid testimony, which, my lawyer tells me, is insufficient, as Priscilla and Grace were accessories, though innocent ones; if the demand be persisted in, I must either replace it, or consequences very unpleasant will follow.

"The Major I cannot apply to; for in money matters, he has always been too liberal to render a call for so serious a sum necessary on my own account: and, to confess the truth, would lead to a discovery I would by every means avoid. Cannot you, my *dear brother*, anticipate what follows? You are the only man in existence to whom I would be obliged for a loan of this nature; and by carefully managing my income, I could in the course of twelve months faithfully and thankfully repay the pecuniary part of the obligation; but the remembrance of it would live in my memory whilst I exist."

I hope my reader has heretofore discovered that Hannah Stokes was no fool. Her tongue was much more eloquent than her pen. Though she, herself, asserted the contrary. In delineating her character, I have endeavoured to represent an *illiterate* woman; but at the same time, one whom education would have constituted a prodigy; for, under every disadvantage the want of it occasioned, she was clever, artful, and imposing; but

marred, instead of forwarding her present cause, by the frequent repetition of "dear brother," a title he was unused to from Mrs. Stokes, and one which caused mortification rather than pride.

Mr. Gaskell gave the artful woman an uninterrupted hearing; and, after animadverting upon his daughters' disobedience, whom he determined in future to govern more rigidly, entered at large upon the reprehensible folly, or, as he thought, wickedness of her own conduct; wickedness, for which his children *had* suffered, and would continue to suffer, either directly or indirectly, until time had erased it from recollection. "That you would not," he continued, "avowedly rob or plunder, I readily believe; but the distinction between that, and wilfully retaining property belonging to another, is so nice, we find a difficulty in separating them. In the eye of the law, the receiver is as criminal as the thief; and you may thank the clemency of Lady Milford for not bringing the matter to a serious trial. That, however, is an affair in which I have

no concern; but where you would make me a principal, I must decline interfering, except by my influence with Major Stokes, and that, you know, is very limited. If your nieces solemnly affirm that a five hundred pound bill was not included in the contents of the purse—but that must be clearly ascertained before I negotiate—I will exert myself to procure the money from your husband; it must be, however, by no artful subterfuge—no well-told falsehood—for, as you justly observe, one fabrication so naturally begets another, that the life of a liar is one continued series of fraud, artifice, and deception. To avoid the possibility of this, if I am to be a mediator, the truth must be told, and nothing but the truth; softened, if you please, but not obliterated. And now, having finished what I wish to say on your affairs, tell me, without reserve, who that forward young man is, who seems to be so familiar with my daughters? If he be a fortune-hunter he is losing his time; and if he marry either of them, he will gain neither respect nor peace of mind. Their disposi-

tions are too analogous to their unhappy mother's, for any men to expect comfort from such a union, and if he be your friend you will do well to caution him."

"He is my friend, and much nearer—my son—"

"Son!"

"Yes! the sole surviving issue of the late Honourable Frederick Grosvenor, and heir to wealth which sets him above the meanness of fortune-hunting. If I have any penetration, he will raise your Priscilla to a height of felicity her own disposition will rather increase than diminish; for it is aspiring like my dear Frederick's, and unhappiness in wedlock more frequently arises from opposite than similar tempers."

"You will pardon my sincerity, Mrs. Stokes, which I never yet sacrificed to what the world calls politeness, nor shall I in this instance. I totally disapprove of your son marrying my daughter; not on account of his illegitimacy—though that would be a material objection with some people—but I wish for no closer connexion with the family.

The union I unfortunately contracted, has been productive of nothing but misery, and undeserving and undutiful as my children are, I would preserve them, if possible, from a similar fate."

Mrs. Stokes' face glowed with vexation, and the quivering of her lips denoted an eagerness to retort. But she had worldly wisdom enough to know, that the present was not a time to shew *real* feeling; not a period to enrage, but to conciliate; and as few females excelled Hannah Stokes in the science of deception, she swallowed her vexation, and with well-affected humility, acknowledged, that her *dear brother* was not so happy as he deserved to be; and that his wife's ill-bred violence was not to be defended, even by a sister. At the same time submitting the propriety, or imprudence, of a match between their children to his better judgment.

The young man now entered, and being formally presented as Mr. Gaskell's nephew, and the son of Frederick Grosvenor, began to shew, what he called, airs and graces;

interlarding his account of foreign manners and countries, with French and Italian phrases, vilely pronounced, and injudiciously introduced.

These errors, far from causing suspicion, served to confirm his *identity* with Mr. Gaskell; who would have been more astonished at finding literature, and real elegance, proceeding from such a stock, than ignorance and foppery. Mrs. Stokes, who imagined to see and admire her son were synonymous, was, for once, out in her conjecture; for this one interview completely disgusted the worthy father, and confirmed his rejection of the desired union.

With these sentiments he reached Devonshire, and, with a zeal which did honour to his heart, painted the situation of Mrs. Stokes, in colours that would have afflicted a *tender* husband, and wrought upon the compassion of many *indifferent* ones. But Major Stokes had been too happy, during the absence of his tyrant, to wish for a return of persecution; and, besides, many circumstances to her disadvantage had been promulgated,

which would never have come to light, had she continued at the Grove; so that, all things considered, he would rather have voted five hundred pounds for her eternal imprisonment, than five pounds to release her. Thus impressed, no wonder his neighbour's rhetoric failed, nor that he quitted the Grove sorry, but not surprised, at the fruitlessness of his embassy; the ill-success of which he immediately transmitted to London.

Meantime, Brierly failed in bringing Mr. Archer to terms; although he offered, on behalf of his client, either to compromise, or agree to arbitration; and Mrs. Stokes, whilst the negotiation was pending, underwent a second examination at Bow Street. Notwithstanding she pretended to have sent an express to Bath, and that her messenger brought the highwayman's confession, of appropriating the five hundred pound bill, as no witnesses were produced, to corroborate the story, she was committed to durance until the sum was refunded. Meantime, the Ensign wrote to his mother, who, in

vain, applied to Mr. Gaskell. Without something more substantial than vague professions, had they been expressed, which they were not, the father determined to prolong his son's captivity, as the only means of correcting his vices; for to shew undue clemency, was, in his opinion, to foster depravity, and lay a foundation for evils, which generally, and deservedly, bring punishment, and too often terminate fatally.

Mrs. Gaskell, resolutely bent upon her darling Walter's release, pondered, for several days, upon ways and means best calculated to promote it. At length, the thought occurred, of borrowing the money from Gossip, and by daily robbing the dinner-table of a single dish, and substituting tea and coffee of a coarser texture, she calculated upon a speedy remuneration. Gossip had, fortunately, in his immediate possession, the sum required; and, proud to accommodate the justice's lady, readily accorded the loan, for which she gave a receipt, and lost no time in transmitting the hundred pounds, thus secretly obtained, to her son. But weeks

and months passed away without making provision for the re-payment; for, notwithstanding Mr. Gaskell had frequent cause to complain of her culinary œconomy; and to wonder why his tea and coffee had lost their usual flavour; so many irresistible temptations offered, in the shape of gowns, caps, bonnets, and fine lace that, though much money was saved in the house-keeping department, there was none to spare for the apothecary.

Brierly, finding he could bring his opponent to no terms of conciliation, instituted a suit in the Court of King's Bench, against the Earl of Milford, as executor of Frederick Grosvenor, for the recovery of fifteen thousand pounds. But as law cannot be had without money, (which sets the axiom that there is justice for the poor, as well as the rich, at defiance) and as Brierly and his client were upon a par in that respect, their wits were at work day and night, to procure the sums necessary for Mrs. Stokes' liberation, which was the first object in the intended prosecution.

If once at liberty to journey into Devonshire, she had no doubt of procuring money, by one means or another; the difficulty lay in obtaining that liberty. Valuable clothes and trinkets she had in superabundance, but parting with them, was like tearing the soul from the body; and, besides, in buying and selling there is all the difference in the world. The present, however, was not a time to be fastidious; money was the object, and money must be had. To furnish it, she divested herself of all her jewelry, and every superfluity of apparel, and, with much caution, entrusted them to the care of her dear son, to be disposed of in the best possible manner for their joint benefit. But whether the supposed Frederick thought his interest separate from Mrs. Stokes', or whether he had some favourite, which he wished to supply at a light expense, is uncertain, for his real spring of action was never divulged; the fact is, he only produced two hundred pounds, from the sale of what, in the original purchase, cost six times the money, and

would have fetched from four to five hundred pounds, if honestly disposed of.

Brierly's next resource, and Mrs. Stokes expressed her sorrow that it was not anterior to the one which robbed her of her finery, was a Jew; well known for lending money upon the most precarious security, but who charged exorbitant interest to make himself amends, as he said, for the frequent losses thereby occasioned. Being introduced to Mrs. Stokes, he was shown the forged bonds; and, also, fully informed of the Lady's affinity to Major Stokes; and the little probability there appeared, that so respectable a man would long suffer his wife to remain in debt, even if the law-suit should not terminate so soon as they had every reason to expect. Jacobs, after talking in the usual way of bad securities, and doubtful payments, consented to advance four hundred pounds, on condition of receiving two hundred a year, until the principal was reimbursed. This usurious clause being agreed to, the parties separated perfectly satisfied with each other, and with themselves; and Brierly had the plea-

sure of conducting Mrs. Stokes to her old abode; after which, he lost as little time in forwarding her cause, as the necessary delays of the law would admit. But, previous to this period, Mr. Archer sent a confidential person into Yorkshire, who learnt, on his arrival at Beverley, not only that both the lawyer and witnesses were dead, but that the clerk of the former had emigrated to America.

This intelligence, unwelcome, though not entirely unexpected, but the more plainly convinced the solicitor, that should the whole business prove a forgery, they had people to deal with, whose art was equal to their roguery, and only to be foiled by cunning great as their own.

Mrs. Stokes no sooner regained her liberty, than she posted down into Devonshire, and assuming airs of tenderness and concern, regretted her long absence, and assured her dear Major, that she had not enjoyed a moment's happiness since their separation.

Time was, when Major Stokes would have

been duped by such professions; but the servants who were, or pretended to be, entirely in her interest when present, no sooner saw her depart, than each individual had something to allege against her. Scarcely a vice, in the catalogue of human offences, but was laid to her charge; some without foundation, and many greatly exaggerated; such is the general sincerity and gratitude of menials! I mean such as inhabit the luxurious houses of the great. Dissipation, idleness, and extravagance, are the root of evil, where education is called in to counteract them; but where ignorance is added, there must be more real goodness of heart, and firmness of mind, than generally fall to the lot of the low-bred and the vulgar, to withstand their influence. Besides, as I before hinted, the Major had been too happy in the separation, to be very anxious for a re-union, and nothing but mortification was visible, when his wife made her unexpected appearance. Several days succeeded, when hypocrisy, on her part, was returned by disgust on his, ere

the artful woman could find a fit opportunity to open her meditated attack; although she had almost daily prepared his mind, for some pecuniary demand, by talking of the claims of her accomplished son, and the difficulty there would be in forcing his relations to allow them. At length, she ventured to hope that he, Major Stokes, would support her dear Frederick by his patronage and his purse; when she would cheerfully join in any bond or security, to reimburse the money advanced, as soon as the law decided in their favour, of which her solicitor had not the smallest doubt. "Pray, Mrs. Stokes," enquired her husband, "how ended the disgraceful business your brother-in-law interested himself about?"

"Why, my dear Major, it ended as I, and every one who knew the merits of the business, expected. The jury honourably acquitted me of any knowledge of the five hundred pound bill; indeed, every dispassionate person was convinced, on the first examination, that the highwayman had appropriated it to his own use, long before he

robbed *us*, and made the exchange which produced those ever to be deplored consequences. But let us drop the unpleasant theme, and give me leave to hope you will lend your influence in support of my son's claims. Without money you know law is not only slow in its progress, but uncertain in its success; and I am sure you will join me in thinking that fifteen thousand pounds are worth looking after, and not to be lost when a trifling advance would insure them."

"What call you trifling?"

"Six or seven hundred pounds, my lawyer says, would be the utmost required; and to you, my dear Major, that is nothing when a good of such magnitude may be accomplished. I see your opinion coincides with mine, and you will further agree with me, that procrastination would but heighten our difficulties. Shall I then have the pleasure of your company to town, or will you remain in this delightful retirement? You know how much I value your society; but if you feel the smallest reluctance to the journey, a draft upon your

banker will answer every purpose, and I will encounter this den of parchments and perplexities alone. When do you think it expedient I should set forth?"

"The sooner the better."

"So I think; therefore give me the check to night, and I will depart to-morrow morning."

"You shall have a *check*, Mrs. Stokes, but of a different kind from what you expect. A check to your follies and extravagances—a check to your tyranny and oppression—and I wish, for your own sake, it may likewise prove a check to your vices."

"What does the man mean?"

"I mean, Madam, to be *indeed* a *man*, and to emancipate myself from a seven years' captivity. Whilst I had only your temper to complain of—and heaven knows that was more than my weak frame could contend with, I was content to bear the chain myself had forged; but to vice and wickedness I afford no sanction by my presence; would I could as easily withdraw my name."

"Your boasted name, Major Stokes, was

never so truly honoured, as since I condescended to bear it. But explain yourself. What wickedness and vice do you allude to?"

"Your wickedness in concealing the vice which made you a mother—your wickedness in retaining another's property, even if you are proved innocent of the more atrocious part of the story—your wickedness in circulating a report that you were *married* to Mr. Grosvenor, and sending false statements to the newspapers—your wickedly intriguing with Captain Simmons during our passage from India, and your wanton behaviour to several individuals since our short residence in this country. I could swell the catalogue of your crimes by dwelling on pride, ingratitude, and hardness of heart; but, if you have any virtue remaining, I have said enough—if it be entirely extinct, all I can say will avail nothing."

I shall not defile my paper with the coarse language and vulgar epithets with which Mrs. Stokes assailed her husband. Billingsgate never afforded a more complete virago,

or expressed sentiments in more technical terms. Abuse was more attended to than defence, although that was attempted; but the Major, ever open to rational argument, closed his mind, and shut his heart against intemperance, and unmerited reproach.

The result of this domestic broil was a summons to Mr. Gaskell, and the Reverend Mr. Cavendish, whom the Major chose to appoint arbitrators in the event of a separation, not more anxiously wished by himself than Mrs. Stokes, provided she could obtain a maintenance suited to her present style of living. This the two worthy umpires declared neither reasonable nor just; for having brought her husband no fortune, and her behaviour meriting rather punishment than reward, they decreed the Major's offer of two hundred pounds a year, as much, or more than any reasonable woman under the same circumstances ought to expect. But Mrs. Stokes seldom acted as a *reasonable* woman *ought;* and would hear of no separate provision that did not involve a clear five hundred pounds; railing at her brother-

in-law for his pitiful notions of prudence and economy, and almost abusing the good curate for sanctioning so scanty a pittance.

The two gentlemen finding nothing definitive could be adjusted, left the Major and his wife to settle their own differences; and finding, after many days wrangling, that she must be restricted in her expenses, whether at home or abroad, preferred the latter, on the Major offering to give her the first year's annuity in advance—and also to increase her income, provided he heard favourable reports of her behaviour.

Thus ended the negotiation which Mrs. Stokes foolishly fancied would enable her to pay the Jew, and carry on the law suit. But lest the Major's present spirited conduct, should be thought incompatible with his former weak indulgence, we would observe—that though he possessed much milkiness of disposition, there was in his temper, when once roused, a determined firmness almost amounting to inflexibility; and a native sense of honour, unsubdued by strong attachment, that could never forgive the in-

fidelity of his wife—a wife whom he too late found, possessed no single requisite to constitute domestic happiness.

We now with pleasure to ourselves, and we hope to the satisfaction of our reader, return to our heroine, from whom we have too long strayed.

Although an unusual portion of time was dissipated in visiting and viewing the various curiosities with which London abounds, yet Fanny paid diligent attention to her studies. Masters in the various branches of polite education were retained to perfect the accomplishments so auspiciously begun; and Lady Ann's heart bounded with delight, at seeing her daughter's mental acquirements keep pace with those so liberally bestowed by nature.

Her seventeenth birth day was fast approaching, and Mr. Strickland had long determined to celebrate it as a day of peculiar festivity. For this purpose, all their mutual friends and acquaintance had notice to hold themselves in readiness for a ball and supper on the twenty-first of April. Fanny and

Rosette, aided by Sir Herbert Huntley, had finished the invitation cards, and were innocently enjoying the Baronet's ludicrous description of the eccentricities of polite life, when Mr. Moseley, with suppressed agitation, entered, to take, as he said, an *everlasting leave*. At the word *everlasting*, Lady Ann felt a shuddering creep through her veins, as though some heavy calamity was pending. The young ladies started, and anticipated the loss of their companion, as an evil of the most serious nature—for he was beloved by them both with fraternal attachment—and to be deprived of his society *for ever*, was an ill no foresight had prepared them for.

Even Sir Herbert Huntley looked grave; but as solemnity, rather than wretchedness, was the immediate character of Moseley's countenance, and seemingly denoted that his words and feelings were at variance (for his attachment to Fanny had been too apparent to believe he could relinquish her without a struggle) the Baronet rallied his spirits, and, something between jest and earnest said, "Faith, Moseley! you must either be

a wonderful philosopher, or a very great hypocrite! You talk of *parting* for *ever*, with as much sang froid, as I should say, 'Good morning to you!' and with a countenance scarcely more serious than you ought naturally to assume, when taking leave of such a charming trio, for a period the most limited. This, I know, you great geniuses call commanding the passions, and not submitting to that weakness we silly fellows are subject to; but with all due deference to your superior wisdom, I think, and I hope I shall have the ladies on my side, that sincerity is preferable to philosophy; and that the dominion of reason is never so fully evinced, as by our devotion to that sex who were created for our happiness; and in whose faithful tenderness, and sincere attachment, men find a solace for all the cares—the disappointments—and perplexities that flesh is heir to."

"Sir Herbert Huntley," replied Moseley, "I am a riddle that all your penetration has hitherto been unable to resolve. That phylosophy has not, in me, conquered feeling,

whatever my countenance may betray, I am tremblingly sensible; but the character I have hitherto assumed is all a feint, and has been attended with too much perplexity, and too little success, to warrant a continuance of it. My first meeting with Lady Ann and Miss Fitz-York, and the announcement of a name, to which I had in fact no title, suggested a scheme which has been attended with consequences the most *venial* deception deserves, namely, *defeat*. To acquit myself of crime as well as error, I must trespass upon the patience of you, ladies, for a few moments, whilst I candidly relate the origin and progress of my fictitious appellation.

"It was my lot last summer to visit Devonshire in search of relatives most respected though unknown. Travelling with only a single attendant, as I wished to remain unnoticed, except by those immediately concerned, I joined your Ladyship's party at Lyme, unconscious either of your name or title; and introduced myself by my travelling appellation, *Mr. Moseley*. A short

period put me in full possession of Lady Ann Fitz-York's too well-founded family objections, to permit the most distant hope of *Lord* Moseley being received as the son of her choice, even though he were happy enough to make an interest in the heart of his lovely cousin. Under this impression, can you blame me for endeavouring to accomplish under the character of *Mr. Moseley*, what I knew it vain to attempt as your *Nephew?* I continued the deception, under the influence of Lady Milford, after every hope vanished; and her Ladyship's maxim of perseverance only proves, that though it *frequently* succeeds, I am a melancholy proof that it likewise *sometimes* fails.

"Could I have gained the affections of Miss Fitz-York in my assumed character—in my real one I knew it was hopeless—I flattered myself her revered mother would have sacrificed family resentment to her nephew's happiness. With the first hope, the latter also fled, unless my kind aunt will sanction her grateful Moseley's pretensions, and my beloved cousin accept the devotion of a heart

too faithfully attached, ever to admit another impression."

The shock caused by his Lordship's declaration of eternal absence, was changed into a smile of astonishment, as he owned the unity of *Lord* and *Mr.* Moseley; and that again succeeded by sensations of feeling and concern, at the pathos with which he concluded. Fanny, the rose of modesty mantling her cheek, and her eyes humid with the tear of sensibility, presented a hand which rivalled the snow in whiteness, to his Lordship, and in timid accents, begged he would accept it as a sacred pledge of friendship, and with it, all the esteem and sisterly affection her heart was capable of. "That I have been deceived,' she continued, "almost against the evidence of my senses, is an acknowledged truth; and one that, to common observation, not entering into facts, would convict us all of credulity, in giving credence to the colour of a wig, in contradiction to person, manner, and voice, all combining against it; but Lady Milford so strongly sanctioned the deception that who durst doubt?"

"Not I, for one," replied Sir Herbert. For naturally supposing that Lady Ann's knowledge of her nephew was *positive*, I gave up my sense of sight and hearing to that supposition, although I was frequently more than half inclined to scepticism."

"My dear George," said Lady Ann, "I cannot positively blame any thing sanctioned by Lady Milford, because I am certain all her words and actions are governed by a heart replete with goodness, and that what her mind plans, her head can execute with wisdom and propriety. So much in defence of your scheme; now let us examine the other side of the argument. You wished to gain my daughter's affections in a borrowed character. Fanny knew my sentiments were in opposition to any closer connection with you, as *Lord Moseley*, than the present ties of consanguinity authorise, consequently was forewarned; but against you, as *Mr. Moseley*, she had no such shield, and without flattery, you have attainments, both personal and mental, that might have conquered an unguarded heart. What unhappiness would

have resulted from such a conquest, I tremble to think. Your cousin's peace of mind sacrificed, and myself rendered miserable from inability to restore it; for never, my dear George, could I, or would I, consent to an alliance where Miss Fitz-York was not sought and courted by the principals of a family, as ardently as by its representative. That Fanny has withstood both your real and assumed character, I cannot be too thankful; and hope, whenever she is seriously attached, there will not only be a reciprocity of feeling, but that she will *confer* as much honour as she *receives*. I have, on various occasions, expressed my fears to Lady Milford; they are now unhappily verified. But had her Ladyship cautioned and advised you, agreeable to my wish—to have done it myself, without a possitive declaration, would have been presuming and indelicate—absence would, ere this, have softened the fervour of your attachment, and reduced it to the friendship and brotherly love I hope yet to witness between relatives so aimable and closely allied. I have now given you my sentiments; and

though we shall grieve to lose you, necessity must reconcile us to the privation; till time restore you to our society, easy, happy, and contented, as your own most sanguine hopes and our wishes can make you."

Lord Moseley appeared the image of despair during this address, and seemed doubtful whether to reply or leave the room in silence; when Mrs. Bloomfield and her daughter entered. "Well, girls," exclaimed the lively widow, "have you heard the news."

"What, the report of ———?"

"No! that's not it. But do not expect me, Sir Herbert, to go through the scene with you. Mine's no *School for Scandal*, but an historical fact which time will hand down to posterity to the credit of our sex. But bless me! what's the matter? now I look at you all, there appears an air of grief—of sober sadness pervading the room, that strikes me as more than commonly unusual. Are you, baronet, at the bottom of it? or has our lively friend Moseley fatigued the animal spirits by his exhilarating sallies, and

left them to regret, that violent animation is frequently succeeded by weariness and languor."

"I fear," replied Moseley, endeavouring to conquer his feelings—for he dreaded the widow's satire too much to lay himself under its lash, when there was a possibility of avoiding it—"I fear, madam, I have unhappily caused the too perceptible depression you remark; and that I may not still further add to it, I shall in future avoid those exuberances you mention, and at present make my bow."

Moseley's retreat was followed by a sigh, and an interchange of look that spoke the anguish of his sympathizing relatives. Both were observed by Mrs. Bloomfield, but she had too much real feeling and goodness of heart, to make observations, where neither foppery, or fault, were conspicuous; and, solely with a view to divert the discourse, she addressed her daughter: "I should conceive, Barbara, from the start and the blush which accompanied our entrance, that Mr. Moseley was not so entirely strange to you

as I believe him to be; where have you met before?"

"I was unconscious, my dear madam, of either the start or blush; they were equally unauthorized; for, except once, and that several months ago, at this very door, and by accident, I never before had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Moseley."

"Nor have you, Barbara," replied Lady Ann, met *Mr. Moseley* now. The gentleman who just departed, is my nephew, *Lord Moseley*, whom I should assuredly have introduced, and recommended to your favour, had not the embarrassment Mrs. Bloomfield noticed, eradicated for the moment all ideas of propriety. That embarrassment partly arose from the deception his Lordship has too successfully practised, and but now confessed, of imposing himself upon us, alternately as the Lord and the Commoner; thereby deceiving our senses, and setting at nought that penetration on which we falsely prided ourselves."

"By what means, my dear madam," asked Barbara, "was the deception so completely

accomplished, as to deceive you all? It appears to me almost incredible."

"It bears the same incredibility in my eye," replied Fanny, "now we are in the secret; and I am sure you will laugh at our credulity when I tell you, the deception was accomplished solely by the assistance of a *Black Wig*, and the announcement of *Mr.* or my *Lord*, as suited his immediate purpose."

"And what end was to be answered by so singular a deception?"

"What could it be," replied Sir Herbert with much good-humoured quickness, "but the vanity of rivalling *himself*. Finding he was a favourite in one character, he wished to become a *greater* favourite in the *other*; but failing in the attempt, he candidly confesses the whole scheme, and throws himself upon the mercy of these ladies, than whom there are not three such benignant deities in existence, save and except Mrs. and Miss Bloomfield."

"That's right, Baronet; never make a compliment to one woman at the expense of another; that is, if she be present. It engen-

ders enmity, and answers no earthly purpose but to put us out of conceit with ourselves; and that is a matter so *easily accomplished*, in this age of *modest timidity*, that we ought rather to be encouraged than depressed."

"You mentioned news, madam, on your first entrance," observed Rosette; "may we be indulged with a communication?"

"Certainly. The post, you know, has day after day been imposing upon the public by false statements, and tantalizing the Misses with fancied accounts of bridal finery; but this morning the T——y L——g was, to all intents and purposes, married at St. James's church in a cottage bonnet, in which she is said to have looked interesting; and who can doubt it? Eighty thousand a year would create interest in any breast susceptible of the love of *money*. That the *avaricious* plans of the R——l D——e were defeated, reflects credit upon the young lady, and I hope the son of the Irish Secretary will never give her cause to repent sacrificing ambition on the altar of Love."

CHAP. III.

A BIRTH-DAY BALL—CHARACTERS—AND AN ELOPEMENT.

THE day preceding Mr. Strickland's jubilee, Fanny and Rosette had been making purchases, and were returning to their carriage, when a handsome chariot drew up, and discovered the identical lady they before remarked as resembling Julia. Her face was towards them as they left the shop; but some object on the other side apparently attracted her attention, for she immediately turned her head, and they departed more than ever struck with the similitude.

The decorations for the approaching fête were the sole invention and joint labour of our young friends, and never were taste and fancy more successfully exerted. The flowers which ornamented the ball-room floor were copied from life, and almost rivalled nature's handy works. So rich and glowing

were the tints, so correct the delineation, that Mr. Strictland declared, had there been another apartment in the house at all suitable for the purpose, he would have locked up the one in question, and preserved it as a monument of female genius and industry.

The lustres, the sconces, the candelabres—the fruits, the ices, the jellies, and confections, were all supplied from eminent houses in the city; for to send west of Temple-bar for what could be as well supplied from the east, would, Mr. Strictland thought, be as much out of character in a London merchant, as for a duchess to buy her millinery in St. Paul's Church-yard, or a countess her sarsnets and muslins in Cheapside. "Let every class of people," he observed, "encourage, as much as possible, the country, the town, or neighbourhood, where they reside; nor cherish an opinion, that because certain articles are purchased near home, they must necessarily be inferior in intrinsic value, or exterior shew. It is to this absurd notion we may attribute the censurable partiality for foreign commodities, to the detriment of

our own manufacturer or artizan, who yield to no country on the globe, either in theory or practice, and yet are obliged frequently to give place to artists, who have no superior claim to encouragement upon the score of merit, and certainly none upon the scale of local pretension. National prejudice, in my opinion, is both hateful and uncharitable; but not so *unnatural* as national *discouragement.* The one takes its rise from bigotry, and is as illiberal as that which contracts Christian salvation; or, in political controversy, sets every one down for a fool who differs in sentiment; the other owes its existence to the vain-glorious wish of being first in the list of fashionable folly; whose votaries shew their weakness by despising what is in itself good, but easily attainable; and paying prodigally for foreign merchandize of inferior quality, and valuable only in proportion to its scarcity."

To my town readers, who daily witness the unjustifiable profusion of a modern entertainment; where lamps of variegated hues rival the meridian sun in splendour—

where hundreds are given for chalking a floor, whose beauty is not of as many hours duration—where more money is squandered upon an opera-singer for warbling a single song, than would comfortably maintain many poor families for twelve months—a more particular description of Mr. Strickland's rooms would be uninteresting. To my country readers, "who never knew dissipation beyond a race ball," the recital would appear like the romance of a fairy tale, and be as easily credited. Therefore we shall leave it to the reader's imagination to form the *coup d'œil* according to his own fancy; only observing, that nothing was wanting to make it tasteful and elegant; and nothing expended in mere profusion and extravagance.

The company were numerous and respectable, nor were titles wanting to give *eclat* to our heroine's natal day. Lady Milford had represented Fanny and her mother in such seducing colours, that the Duchess of Newland and her daughters, Ladies Albina and Sidney Talbot, begged an introduction;

which her Ladyship, proud to do honour to her young relative, and, perhaps, with a further view of mortifying her Lord, and his equally arrogant sister, gladly complied with.

Her Grace had previously promised herself for the twenty-first; but to gratify Lady Milford's wish, that Fanny's coming out should be equally respectable and splendid; she waived her former engagement, and entered Mr. Strictland's hospitable mansion at eleven o'clock, led by her nephew, the Honourable Leslie Talbot, and followed by her daughters, Lady Milford and Maria; the two latter escorted by Captain Corbett, of the guards, who had of late paid much and particular attention to Lady Maria.

The apartments anterior to the ball-room were by this time crowded; and Fanny was leading off the second dance with Sir Herbert Huntley, when our fashionable party made their way to Lady Ann and Mr. Strictland, amidst much bustle and confusion, visible both amongst the dancers and the loungers, when names of such high consi-

deration were announced. For, previous to their arrival, no title above the rank of a City Knight and his Lady Wife had resounded through the anti-rooms, if we except Sir Herbert Huntley; nor were their superiors expected to grace a Lombard-street ball. The dapper, smirking, smiling Sir Billys and Sir Jackys, with their overgrown wives and affected daughters, looked as they felt, chagrined at the little wished-for appearance of real rank and legitimate courtliness. To these enviable distinctions, the younger ladies added much native loveliness; and each individual betrayed a well-bred, unaffected ease of manner, peculiar to their situation, and rarely acquired by those, who found their claims to gentility upon the fortuitous events of trade, or the precarious chances of Change alley. By this observation, I mean not to cast reflections upon commerce, or those respectable people who honourably follow it. They are equally estimable in their way, and, perhaps, upon the whole, more valuable members of society. All I wish to urge is, that the trading

part of the community support their own rank in life; and, not by adopting, or affecting manners, which never sit easy, lay themselves open to the censure and ridicule of those, who have sense and moderation enough to act consistently.

The dance being finished, Fanny and her partner joined the Duchess, and were most graciously received. Sir Herbert Huntley was known by name to her Grace; but no personal intercourse subsisted between them, although her nephew Talbot and he were upon terms of familiarity, owing to a chance-medley rencontre at a house of fashionable dissipation in the neighbourhood of Portland-place. Captain Corbett was a stranger to the whole party, except the Countess and Lady Maria; and was one of those hateful and dangerous characters, a male coquette. In the company of young women, who had attained any degree of celebrity, either for fashion or beauty, "he sighed, and looked, and sighed again;" not from feeling, but with a systematic design to gain attention and win their affections. For this his person

was eminently qualified: to a handsome face and fascinating manners, were added a self-possession and confidence, nothing had power to overcome, and a persevering industry, which would have been honourable in a good cause.

This being Lady Maria's first winter in town, which the daily prints had not failed to make public, he laid his plans of introduction; and finding her likely to obtain, made his court with a perseverance few unprepossessed females could resist from a man of Corbett's pretensions. Thus matters rested, without any positive declaration, for that was not admitted into the noble Captain's system, when the city ball introduced our heroine to his notice. Fanny's personal pretensions were every way superior to her cousin's; and the light in which she appeared this evening, threw a radiance around her, which produced in Corbett's eyes an appearance nearly celestial. As queen of the fete, universal homage and attention were paid to her, even by the Duchess and Lady Milford. In beauty she bore away the palm from her young

companions; and so light and graceful were her movements in the meandering dance, so much cheerful happiness shone in her animated countenance, always beaming with mind and intelligence, that the men invariably voted her an object of delight, and many of the females a subject of envy.

After proper respect had been paid to Lady Milford's friends, the dance was resumed. Sir Herbert Huntley had the honour of precedence with Lady Albina Talbot; Major Grantham, a particular friend of the Baronet's, stood up with Lady Sidney; Captain Corbett led off Lady Maria; Fanny, contrary to the general rule and her own wish, which would have placed her at the bottom of the set, made the fourth couple with Mr. Talbot; Miss Bloomfield took the next station with a young Clergyman; and Rosette gave her hand to the heir of a City Knight, who was moreover one of the body corporate. The remainder of the set consisted of young people, whom my readers will probably never hear of again, and therefore it would be needless to name.

Should any of them, at a future period, stumble upon our path, of which at present there is no denying the possibility, we shall bear this evening in mind, and not fail to recognize them, as acting a part in Mr. Strictland's jubilee.

Whilst the dance proceeded, the Duchess, Lady Milford, Lady Ann, Mrs. Bloomfield, and Mr. Strictland, entered into a spirited conversation, without noticing the vicinity of an elderly gentleman, who, however, seemed to pay more attention to their discourse, than to the merry groupe, whose movements kept pace with the lively fiddle and animating tabor. After discussing many fashionable topics, Mrs. Bloomfield descanted upon what she pleased to call the faults of the Regent.

No one choosing, however, to controvert, or second her, we suppose the company thought the time or place ill suited for such discussion. But the widow consulted neither, when the foibles or follies of the great appeared to deserve reprehension; in such cases no delicacy appalled her—no punctilio

restrained the license of her speech—she dashed through thick and thin, and the more elevated her object, the more spirited were her philippics.

The Duchess took advantage of a pause to hope the present introduction would be a forerunner of intimacy and friendship. "We, who live *in* the world," she continued, "must, in some degree, live *for* the world; but though I am obliged to give up some portion of my time to frivolity, I am never so truly happy as when surrounded by a select few, who draw their enjoyments from sources more solid. These seasons of intellect are countenanced by many worthies of either sex, who with Lady Milford shines a bright constellation, and reflects more honour on my *conversationes* than, being present, I shall venture to disclose."

"I am glad," replied the Countess, "your Grace is considerate enough to spare my modesty. Blushes are so rare in the nineteenth century, and, of consequence, in such high request, that, though exhibited by a female, neither young nor handsome, they

might be found irresistible, and draw more attention than youth and beauty, not educated at Tremorne, would like to witness."

"That insinuation means, I suppose," subjoined her Grace, "that envy and jealousy are strangers at Tremorne."

"Not absolute strangers," replied Lady Ann; "but they are visitors to whom we give no encouragement, and, of course, seldom intrude to embitter those pleasures, their frequent society would render joyless and destructive."

"Happy Tremorne!" ejaculated the stranger, "and doubly happy the parent, whose instructions and example have banished such intruders from her dwelling."

Lady Ann and Mr. Strictland's looks expressed surprise, for the person of the stranger was unknown, nor had he been introduced. But as his appearance was, in a prepossessing degree respectable, and highly venerable, they naturally concluded he came in company with some friend, and consequently was no improper inmate.

"Lady Ann Fitz-York," said Mrs. Bloom-

field, looking at the stranger, "is indeed deserving of all praise; and at this moment experiences the happy effects of an education constructed upon principles of wisdom and rationality. In Miss Fitz-York we trace the modelling hand of a master, where nothing is distorted or out of proportion. Each part, or pursuit, harmonizes, and the whole approaches as near perfection as humanity is capable of." "And are these the females whose nearest connexions neglect them?" asked the stranger, "connexions whose greatest boast consists in their alliance?"

"It ought not to be," replied Mrs. Bloomfield.

"It *shall* not be," vociferated the stranger with some warmth; "I have not only the will but the power to correct so flagrant an abuse, and both shall be exerted in support of female weakness."

"Support *females*, my good friend," replied the widow, "with all your power and might; but in this instance, we confess no *weakness*, either mental or corporeal; education has corrected them both. Extreme delicacy,

or affected imbecility form no part of Lady Ann's system; the mentality of her pupil has acquired strength from exertion, and power from frequent use."

"You are a warm advocate, madam."

"I would fain prove so. You will never find me vapid, where worth is to be extolled, or folly ridiculed. In either instance, I praise or blame with all the powers of my mind; though I confess the *lash* or the *currycomb* feel more easy in my grasp, than Fame's renowned trumpet; for the latter frequently speaks of deeds, which it were for the credit of the party to bury in oblivion; whilst the former endeavours to *whip* or *scrub* people into an appearance, at least, of rationality and propriety; though there may be no original bias in the mind for either."

"Your opinions and choice of words, madam, are uncommon, and I like them. Sincerity of expression is so little used, especially by your sex, that it pleases from its novelty, and ought to be valued in proportion; to convince you of its estimation in my opinion, I request, for cogent reasons,

to be indulged with a private interview; and if you honour me so far———"

"Name your *time*, and I will appoint a *place*."

"Sunday morning, Twelve o'clock."

"At my own house. There's my card. But if you have any matrimonial designs in your head, of which I am the object, I advise you for your own sake, to seek no further communication; for I shall most certainly be cruel, although you are a comely man—an Irishman—and on the right side of seventy."

"Were I thirty years younger, there is nothing about you that might tempt a man, not over fastidious, to make matrimonial overtures; but from me you have nothing to fear. It is the happiness and future prosperity of the young and blooming Fanny I am anxious to promote; and I think a communication with you may forward it."

"Say no more. On such a subject I should not fear to appoint a meeting, even in my bed chamber. But give me your card, that I may know at least the name of the person

with whom I have thus publicly made an appointment."

The old gentleman wrote the name of O'Brian on a slip of paper, and with a bow of the old school withdrew.

"Similar minds naturally unite," exclaimed her Grace. "The Hibernian appears little less eccentric than yourself, Mrs. Bloomfield; and if it were possible, invisibly to witness your tête-à-tête, I fancy amusement of the most delicate kind might be obtained."

"I have heard Lady Mountcastle," observed the Countess, "mention the name of O'Brian as attached to a wealthy relative of her Lord's, and from whom the family expect a large accession of property. From the hint this gentleman gave, I am led to conclude they are one and the same person."

"Your Ladyship's conjecture," replied Mr. Strictland, "will I doubt not, be found correct; but he seems to entertain too high an opinion of Lady Mountcastle's disposition, or to know too little of Lady Ann Fitz-York, if he flatters himself with any

lasting accommodation. Their minds are too lofty to assimilate."

"That sets my observation at nought," smilingly observed the Duchess.

"What observation, your Grace?" asked Mr. Strictland.

"That similar minds unite," replied the Duchess.

"Not at all, madam. For though the sisters are both high-minded, there is not the least similarity between them. The loftiness of Lady Mountcastle consists in overweening pride, and overbearing contempt towards those who take a lower step on the ladder of elevation than herself. Lady Ann Fitz-York's dignity, on the contrary, has its source in true greatness of mind, and real nobility of heart. Her disposition points out suavity and good breeding towards all created matter, poor or rich, with the single exception of those who treat her and hers with unmerited contempt. Towards such, her spirit is lofty and commanding beyond what could be expected from the usual meekness and mildness of her manners."

"If you want another witness to Lady Ann's character," subjoined the Countess, let me be called; who have known her long enough to vouch for her goodness, though not long enough to counteract that oppression and injustice she so properly resents from the senior members of her noble house."

"Lady Ann could only bow her thanks for the flattering and friendly remarks of her host, and his visitors, as the dance at that moment ended, and Fanny, with her more immediate companions, joined the group; when the conversation took a desultory turn till supper was announced. No delicacy the season could produce, or money purchase, was omitted to gratify the palate; and though nature was not distorted to produce *artificial rivers*, inhabited by real fish, or *banks* of *foliage*, in an atmosphere where neither could possibly exist; and the formation of which would have fed and clothed all the poor squalid objects, who frequent the neighbourhood of *Pall Mall*; yet, there was every thing to satisfy *true taste*, and to

give pleasure to minds not vitiated by the extravagant refinements of modern luxury.

Mr. O'Brian anxiously pressed forward to gain a seat where he could observe, without appearing watchful, the motions, and hear the conversation of our heroine; and was fortunate enough to procure a situation nearly opposite. Captain Corbett, her partner in the last dance, was seated beside her, and, in tones the most gentle and insinuating, offered his services to forward her wishes, and supply her wants. Fanny, the unsophisticated child of nature and education, unsuspicious of any lurking design, treated him with unaffected good humour, although she found him less lively—less pleasant—and, altogether, less agreeable than Sir Herbert Huntley, Lord Moseley, or indeed any young man of her acquaintance.

Had Fanny been a vain girl, or even a coquette, she might have seen something in Corbett's manner that would have fed the one, and gratified the other; but fully assured of his attachment to her cousin, she attributed the softness of his manners to a

natural feebleness of character; and the languishing of his really well-set eyes, to a weekness in the optic nerve.

Mr. O'Brien watched narrowly, and had she observed him, she would have thought rather rudely, all Fanny's actions; and found as he had been led to hope, much to admire. There was a native ease and unconsciousness in all she said and did, that charmed the old gentleman, and raised a friend where she had no expectation of making even a common acquaintance.

After supper dancing re-commenced with additional spirit; but to our heroine's great relief, she was pre-engaged whenever Corbett solicited her hand. This, of course, made him very unhappy, at least he *said* so; and who could disbelieve words uttered with a sigh, and eyes that looked, and languished, and spoke unutterable things.

A waning moon lighted the nocturnal revellers to their different homes; and as rest, for this night at least, was gone beyond recall; with no immediate wish to overtake him; another hour imperceptibly glided away in

remarks, the offspring of gaiety and inexperience on the one side, and observations, resulting from sagacity and worldly knowledge on the other. "I very much dislike," observed Fanny, "though I scarcely know why or wherefore, the companion whom usage placed by my side at the supper table, and wonder at Maria's taste in selecting such a tame piece of insipidity as an object of preference. To me he appears intellectually weak, and vapidly affected; then there is such a languor in his otherwise fine eyes, that I was more than once on the point of recommending optical aid, to counteract the melting softness which appeared almost to liquify them." "What impression have the Duke of Newland's daughters and Mr. Talbot left upon your mind?" enquired Lady Ann.

"The eldest, Lady Albina, appears as cold, and almost as insensible as marble. Her countenance never once relaxed during the dance, which to me gave her an appearance truly laughable; for can any thing be more whimsical, than to see the face fixed and

immoveable, whilst every other member of the body is engaged in an exercise the most cheerful and exhilarating? I can compare such an exhibition to nothing but the Automaton you shewed me yesterday at Maillardets, whose feats upon the rope were certainly very neat, but soul-less, for want of that animation the human countenance can alone pourtray. Such was Lady Albina's dancing. Her steps were good, and her attitudes graceful, but without the mind, that could alone render them pleasing."

"So much for the Duke's first-born. How did Lady Sidney strike you?"

"As a lively, good-humoured rattle; whose laughing eyes and dimpled mouth made her sister's solemn gravity the more conspicuous. Not that I think she has a jot more mind than Lady Albina, though she possesses the talent of making herself vastly agreeable in a Ball Room. The Honourable Mr. Talbot is a being of a higher description. He cannot only be pleasant, where pleasure is the standing order; but, if I have any penetration, can ornament and embel-

lish any society, however splendid in talent, or eminent in wisdom."

"Heyday!" exclaimed Mr. Strictland, "I never heard you so warm in praise of a young man before. If beauty had been added to his other qualifications, I should have trembled for your heart; but being what your sex in general call a plain man—"

"Not *plain*, Guardian; he is only *not handsome;* and to that cause we may perhaps attribute his mental excellence. For *handsome man*, I generally read *Coxcomb;* nor does my trifling experience, in London at least, dictate an exception, if I omit Lord Moseley. I have not had time, or opportunity this evening, to study character very minutely, but Captain Corbett is a case in point; and if I mistake not, the clergyman who danced with you, Rosette, immediately preceding supper, is another. Those ivory teeth, white hands, and well-formed nails have not arrived at their present perfection, without more anxiety and care than ought to be given to such trifles; and the pains he took to display them, confirm me in a belief

that religion, with him, is secondary to vanity."

"An intelligent yawn from the worthy citizen reminded Lady Ann that sleep, although it might be protracted, would at length assert its rights; and convince us, without the aid of a single argument, that repose is not merely useful, but absolutely necessary.'

The sun had journeyed half his course, though to the inhabitants of London this day invisible, ere Lady Ann met her friend in the breakfast-room; and before the usual enquiries could be answered, a servant announced the Reverend Mr. Cavendish and young Tudor.

Her Ladyship rose with real pleasure to receive them, but checked her joy on perceiving the more than usual paleness and solemnity of the curate's countenance; who, raising her offered hand to his lips, in tremulous accents faultered out his compliments, but without waiting for a reply, rushed to the window, and covering his face with his handkerchief, sobbed aloud. Lady Ann

followed him not, but was silently appealing to Tudor for an explanation; when Fanny and Rosette, the former warbling a favourite air, entered the room. The colour mounted into Tudor's face the moment he heard her voice; but when she entered, his eyes were timidly cast down, as if doubting his reception. A moment, however, was sufficient to dispel all fear; for the friends were no sooner assured of the reality of his presence, than an exclamation of the most pleasurable kind escaped their lips, and seizing each a hand, they poured forth questions as rapidly as if in strife which could utter the greater quantity of matter in a given time; and Henry could only bow, and smile, and forget, in the delirium of the moment, that any object brought him to town of a less pleasing nature than what now presented itself. The friends were only stopped in their rapid career by Lady Ann gravely pointing to Mr. Cavendish, whose grief seemed to have increased, in proportion to the voluble happiness of her, whose present peace he was going to destroy.

The countenances of the young people immediately settled into gravity; and advancing to the worthy pastor, he turned upon them his grief-swollen eyes, and sobbed out "wretched—lost—undone Julia."

"Julia!" exclaimed his sister, "What of Julia? Speak—tell me what of Julia?"

"She has ruined herself!—murdered her father! and entailed everlasting disgrace upon us all!"

Rosette, without answering, fell lifeless into the arms of her friend; when her brother now first discovered his imprudence in not breaking the evil tidings more gently, to a mind susceptibly alive to family attachment. But the evil was beyond recall; and snatching her inanimate form from the scarcely-supporting arms of Fanny, whilst Mr. Strictland rang for assistance, he bitterly apostrophized his own thoughtless precipitance, and more than ever deprecated the vileness of her who had wrought such complicated distress.

The usual remedies had the desired effect in restoring animation; but could they

"minister to a mind diseased?" A sister who, till her own removal to the Tower, had been her constant companion, affectionate relative—and true friend;—whose beauty of person only kept pace with the innocence and purity of her life;—could such a female stoop to dishonour—"throw away the pearl of high price"—and become the slave of licentiousness?

The loss of her honoured parent, under such circumstances, was only a secondary consideration; for death was a cessation of pain, an annihilation of feeling, and what feeling could be otherwise than pained at a daughter's dishonour?

After the first ebullitions of grief had subsided, and Lady Ann had given orders to admit no company, Henry, at the request of his tutor, entered upon the distressing narrative. "Ten days ago," he began, "a letter arrived at the vicarage, directed to Miss Julia Cavendish. It bore the Exeter post mark, and as the writing was evidently his brother's, my tutor naturally opened it, not being able otherwise to account for a circumstance so ex-

traordinary. The letter spoke of the wretchedness of a house not under female management—hinted that the allotted month was expired—and requested her immediate return. Mr. Cavendish, as you may suppose, was thunderstruck at reading these unintelligible words, and lost no time in seeking an explanation from the writer. Mr. Francis Cavendish informed his brother, that Julia requested a month's absence, under the plea of visiting her relations at Tremorne, which he unwillingly granted, though it would have been cruel to refuse. Stepping into the chaise, she said, in rather and embarrassed manner, as he since recollects, 'I shall not write during my absence, but reserve all communication for the fire-side. You will be equally silent, for we sometimes, you know, want matter during our long evening tête-à-têtes, and the adventures of one month will afford subjects of conversation for half a dozen.' 'But for heaven's sake,' continued Mr. Francis Cavendish, 'where is Julia if not at Tremorne? what is become of her?'

"To a question of my tutor's, respecting any attachment she might have formed, he

replied, 'I certainly taxed her with giving too much encouragement to the flirtations of Captain Noble; but she acquiesced in my opinions with such apparent candour, and promised so faithfully to give up the acquaintance, that until your question brought him to my recollection. I had forgot that such a person existed.' 'Her brother now examined the young lady's drawers, but found them empty. His next care was to enquire of an officer, with whom he had frequently seen him, whether Captain Noble remained in town? His friend at first wished to deny all knowledge of him, but seeming suddenly to recollect himself replied, 'he believed *the Captain Noble* alluded to quitted Exeter at such a period,' naming the very day Julia left home.

"This corroborated my Tutor's worst fears, and he returned to Tremorne in a frame of mind which beggars description.

"The disclosure of his daughter's elopement"—continued young Tudor, timidly looking at Rosette, whose face again became of an ashy paleness, "had not I better, my

dear Sir, postpone further communication? Miss Cavendish——"

"Oh! no! no!" replied Rosette, "let me hear all—let me know the worst—your account cannot exceed the dreadful picture my imagination has pourtrayed."

"A fit of apoplexy," continued the youthful narrator, his eyes brilliant with the tear of sensibility, "reduced the dear old man to the brink of the grave; and not till yesterday did he shew the faintest sign of recollection."——

"Recollection!" screamed Rose, "is my dear father still living? Oh joy!—Oh ecstacy!"

"He lives," replied Mr. Cavendish, meekly; "but that, my dear Rose, is no cause of exultation. His more than childish imbecility presents a melancholy picture of bodily and mental ruin, far more grievous—greatly more heart-rending, than had we followed him to the peaceful grave. The moment our good brother George pronounced his case hopeless, though not immediately dangerous, I left home to fulfil that duty to

others, our aged parent no longer requires; that fulfilled, you, my dear girl, with Lady Ann and Miss Fitz-York's permission, will accompany me to Tremorne, and watch the declining days of a man, who, until this heavy calamity befel him, never knew an hour's sickness himself, and yet could sympathize with those that suffered, and minister to the bodily infirmities of the meanest person in his neighbourhood.

"I am now going to the coffee-houses and taverns, to see if I can trace the wretch who seduced poor Julia from her duty."—

"Suppose you do trace him," interrupted Mr. Strictland, "what follows?"

"Nothing that would reflect dishonour on my cloth," replied the Curate; "but rather increase its lustre. I would probe him to the quick; but it should be with no weapon more pointed than the tongue; I would, if possible, bring a sinner to his senses—rescue the once innocent Julia from sinking still deeper into the pit of depravity —and restore her—Oh God! that it were

possible!—to repentance, and to a life of usefulness."

"My dear friend," replied Mr. Strictland, "your meeting with this military scoundrel, and his consequent conversion, are very fine subjects in theory; but give me leave, who know a little more of the world, to assure you, that the practical part will be very different. You are meek and mild, and collected here; but are you prepared to cope with arrogant pride and ignorant impertinence? If the former be his character, he will tell you he has done your sister honour; if the latter, he will quiz your profession, and be doubly insolent under the persuasion that you dare not carry matters to extremity. Trust, my dear Sir, to a cooler head, at least one less interested than your own. I will make the necessary enquiries; if the wretch be known, and his residence ascertained, I will undertake the seducer, whilst you reclaim the seduced; and if we both fail, we must console ourselves with having done our duty, and leave the rest to Providence."

Lady Ann, who generally agreed in think-

ing Mr. Strictland a miracle of prudence, now joined her intreaties, and succeeded in persuading Mr. Cavendish to acquiesce in their friend's proposition, and finally to take that repose the occurrences of the week had nearly deprived him of.

Rosette, when the first paroxysm of grief abated, and reason and reflexion convinced her of the inutility of brooding over ills, for which in their present state there was no remedy, suggested to Fanny, the more than probability of their having twice encountered the deluded Julia; though the little likelihood there then appeared of its being her in reality, had merely pointed out a resemblance. Now the hateful truth is too obvious; they recollected, particularly at their last meeting, two days ago, the lady in the chariot avoiding further notice, by turning away her head as they advanced to the shop-door. "Oh!" continued Rosette, "had I then been convinced of the fatal certainty, I would have forced my way into the carriage, and submitted to any humiliation, to withdraw a sister from the errors of pollu-

tion! She would not have resisted my arguments—I know she would not!—Julia can never be the confirmed victim of vice!—Some base arts have been employed—some deceptive measures used, to seduce a girl habitually innocent, and virtuously educated, from her home—her friends—her religion—and her God! But she will return to them all—I know she will. If once discovered, her brother and sister's tears will work upon a mind not callous from custom—not yet hardened by vicious intercourse."

Rosette really thought as she spoke; but the fact is, Julia, at Rockhampton, innocent, even to childishness, lively, playful, and easily persuaded, because she had no settled opinions of her own, by a six months' residence in Exeter, under the care of a brother, as volatile and fond of pleasure as herself, became a gay, flighty, good-humoured coquette. Flattered by the men, and not under the sober controul of a female, who might have counteracted the poison conveyed by the other sex, she fell an easy prey to the gallant attentions of an officer,

who introduced himself to her notice, under the assumed name of Captain Noble; and painted a life of ease, affluence, and pleasure, in such seducing colours, that the ill-fated Julia, in an evil hour, accepted the protection of a libertine—was the immediate cause of her father's illness, and final death—and brought shame and sorrow upon those, who would have died to save her from either.

Mr. Strictland was indefatigable in his enquiries after Julia's destroyer; but all his endeavours of course proved unavailing. Captain Noble was unknown at the taverns and coffee-houses round St. James's; and after frequenting several places of amusement, in hopes of discovering the infatuated girl, without effect, Rosette and her brother left town to watch by the sick-bed of an expiring parent.

Young Tudor, now in his twenty-first year, had received orders to embark for Heligoland, and quitted London the same day. But, previous to his departure, had a long and interesting conversation with Lady Ann and her daughter. To them he laid open

each emotion of his guileless heart—painted his state of mind from their first acquaintance, even to the present hour—and assured them no length of time—no change of place or circumstances, could alter his fixed resolve to devote his maturity to the interesting companion of his juvenile days; either as a friend, anxious in her happiness, or, could he hope for a return of affection, in a more endearing character. "That I have gone beyond my first intention," he continued, "which was to have ascertained the means of supporting a wife, ere I took the liberty of soliciting one, I confess; but when I reflected on the irresistible loveliness of my angel playfellow, the dangers of procrastination assailed me too powerfully to leave the kingdom in doubt and uncertainty. Pardon, then, my beloved friends, the temerity of your devoted and highly-honoured Tudor; and think of him as one who would, with pleasure, lay down his life to promote your felicity, and who can know no happiness, distinct from your society."

Fanny, whose childish attachment had

"grown with her growth," certainly gave Tudor a decided preference; but she was too happy in her domestic connexions to wish for any change, and least of all, a change that would probably separate her from a parent and friends so deservedly dear.

Lady Ann, who knew every movement of her daughter's heart, thanked him in that daughter's name for the honour his attachment conveyed; and confirmed the pleasure she should have, at some future period, in a nearer alliance, provided his opinions remained the same, and Fanny's confessed friendly regard ripened to a warmer sentiment; reminding him, that he also had parents, who probably had other views—views, distinct from those his youthful imagination had pictured, and widely differing from the plans he had so prematurely formed. "At any rate, my young friend," concluded her Ladyship, "your happiness will be ever dear to us; and whether Fanny be destined to promote it, or the will of Providence point out separate paths, I trust the ultimate end

of both will be the attainment of that felicity you so richly deserve."

Fanny, endeavouring to suppress her tears, gave her hand to Tudor, who, pressing it to his lips and to his heart, rushed out of the room; and, with a foreboding presentiment of future ill, left his native land, and those friends, who, since he had become capable of reflexion, had constituted his chief happiness.

Sir Herbert Huntley's attachment to Rosette, had long been of a decided nature; and a union, sanctioned by both their families, would probably have taken place at this period, had not the imprudence of Julia, and the consequent illness of her father, delayed it. Rosette's arguments against such marriage *ever* taking place, circumstanced as she was, were the result of delicacy and regard for the honour of a man exclusively beloved; but whose reputation was so dear, she would have sacrificed her own happiness, though not without a struggle, to have insured it. "For," observed the heroic maid, the fire of enthusiasm lighting up her countenance,

"should you now honour with your name and title, a sister of her whose criminality will for ever reflect disgrace upon all her connexions, more especially upon me, who until within a few months have been her daily associate, you might be justly blamed for imprudence. Our education, pleasures, pains and pastimes, were minutely similar; and would it be unnatural to conclude, that the conduct of one would be, under similar circumstances, the conduct of both? I hope and believe it would not; you, doubtless, Sir Herbert, think the same; but your wife, should not only be individually without blemish, but far removed from the taint of implication. Since she has nothing but character to bring in exchange for wealth and honour, *that*, at least, should be spotless in itself, and not subject to the reproach of family dereliction."

The young Baronet's regard was too sincere and ardent to be overcome by arguments, strictly proper in her situation, but by no means sound or conclusive. Rosette seemed to make no allowance, though she

was not ignorant of their force, for the difference of constitution and temperament. According to her thesis, children born of the same parents, and educated exactly alike, must, perforce, be similarly virtuous or vicious; yet every day's experience shews the fallacy of this. The good and the wicked, spring from the same parent stem, and though much be allowed to education, it cannot obliterate, though it may correct, constitutional faults and depravities. If, as many assert, the minds of infants are like wax, formed to receive any impression, how is it that children of one family, living under the same roof, and disciplined alike, should differ as much in disposition as in person? If there are no innate ideas, why are the childish pursuits of boys and girls so different? A boy would take no pleasure in dressing a doll, nor a girl in whipping a top; one lad is naturally humane, another cruel; one the advocate of truth, another decidedly given to lying;—on the same ground, one girl is timid, another bold—one sister a prude, another a coquette;—but allowing no in-

nate principles, or ideas, six children of different sexes, brought up together exactly upon the same plan, and there would be no difference in their pursuits—no distinction of character, no variation of manner; they would be equally good, or regularly bad.

What an awful responsibility is here attached to the parent or nurse! It had been better for such that they had never been born, if they are to be answerable for their nurslings' misery, both here and hereafter; which must be the case, if the wicked, the cruel, and the depraved mind is formed entirely upon their instruction.

Sir Herbert's arguments, which tended to this point, were conclusive; at least, they so far satisfied Miss Cavendish, that he received permission to visit Tremorne, and saw his affianced wife and her respectable brother leave town, without any other pain than what her absence occasioned.

CHAPTER IV.

THE HIGHWAY-MAN AT BOW-STREET.—A MALE COQUETTE.—A PRESENTATION AND A QUARREL.

Mrs. Stokes' third appearance at Bow-Street office was in due form announced in the daily prints; and as the public were in full possession of her case, from a copious report of the former examination, a crowded assembly waited to witness the final termination of a trial so extraordinary. She was dressed in the extreme of fashionable elegance, and made her entré with such confidence and self-possession, that pity was banished from the minds of those who naturally feel compassion towards the gentle sex, however appearances may militate against them.

After the usual ceremonies were gone through, the magistrate proceeded in his administration.

"Are you, Mrs. Stokes, prepared to bring vouchers for the truth of your adventure at or near Bath?"

"I shall bring forward a witness, who will swear to the truth of the robbery; and also to a declaration, from the mouth of the highwayman, that the bill in question never was in my possession."

"I am glad of it, for your own sake, and more than glad, that justice will at length be satisfied.—Produce you witness."

Brierly, who sat near the bench, now called in an audible voice for "Robert Greenwood!" when an ill-looking, cadaverous, but decently-dressed man, in whose eye lurked treachery and deceit, came forward, and being sworn, and answering the usual questions respecting name, occupation, &c. declared that he was one of the party who gathered up the fallen highway-man, and conducted him to Bath. That he saw three purses, a ring, and a watch returned to the prisoner at the bar, who left Bath the next morning; that he was employed in attendance upon the culprit, who having occasion for money to purchase necessaries, took out a red morocco purse before him, the witness, and then first discovered the exchange. That he seemed

concerned at the mistake, for fear, as he said, the Lady should get into trouble; and owned that the purse he had given her, was by him stolen from Lady Milford; and besides its present contents, originally contained a bill value five hundred pounds, which he had sent to a woman in Swallow Street with whom he cohabited. That the robber remained at the inn for some time in a dangerous state, but at length decamped without paying his bill, or giving him, the witness, a recompense for all the trouble he had in nursing and attending him."

"Did you ever see the highway-man before or since?"

"Never."

"His face and voice must have become so familiar to you, that you could doubtless recollect both, at a period the most distant?"

"I shall never forget them."

Brierly, who sat on thorns till his client was released, now hoped the Magistrate would discharge Mrs. Stokes, and suffer him to lead her from a place where she had already been too much degraded and exposed.

"Certainly. We shall no longer detain the Lady. Clerk write her release. You, her agent, are doubtless prepared to pay the fees?"

"To any amount." He then with an air of exultation, and a look of triumph directed to his client, which she more than returned, drew forth his purse, when a voice from the crowd exclaimed, "Robert Greenwood is a false witness! I accuse him of perjury, and will attend on the morrow to make good my charge! Whether the prisoner at the bar, and her triumphant lawyer, are confederates, or whether that man has alike imposed upon the court and them, must be hereafter proved! *His* guilt I can make appear as clear as the sun at noon day!"

Thunderstruck at a change so unexpected, and coming in the moment of supposed victory, Mrs. Stokes and her confederates looked, for once in their lives, as they really felt. Guilt was not more deeply imprinted on their *minds*, that it was copied in their *faces*, and no effort could for the moment drive it thence.

But deception had been too long the practice of Hannah and her Lawyer to fail them at the present crisis. Brierly, with recovered confidence, declared some one had been suborned to vilify them, and that perjury would attach to the accuser.

Mrs. Stokes had tried a fainting fit in the same place before without effect; she determined, therefore, on the opposite extreme; and following Brierly's example, loudly declaimed against some secret enemy, who was interested in her prolonged confinement. "I shrewdly guess," she proceeded, "the quarter whence it comes; but innocence must at length triumph, and the oppressor fall into his own toils. To-morrow I shall again attend with my witness, to meet the charge preferred by that stranger."

"We cannot admit your departure upon your own bare word."

"Mr. Brierly will again give bail for my appearance."

"Brierly, yourself, and witness, are exactly in the same predicament, and cannot

be at large without good and substantial security. The business has now assumed a new form, and must be legally acted upon to the very letter. Clerk, write their commitment; and you, who are witness for the perjury, declare your name and place of abode."

The stranger, whose appearance was highly prepossessing, wrote both on a card, which he delivered to the Magistrate, and, bowing to the court, withdrew.

* * * * *

Lady Ann, Fanny, and her Guardian, were leaving home equipped for a walk, when Mrs. Bloomfield descended from her carriage, followed by Mr. O'Brian, the Irish gentleman with whom she made an appointment at the ball; and, with her usual frankness, desired the whole party to return to the drawing-room.

This lady's will was generally delivered in too positive a key to admit of dispute; in their own house, on the present occasion, it allowed of none; they, therefore, quickly retraced their footsteps, without wondering

at the widow's eccentricities, which were by this time too well understood to cause surprise.

They were scarcely within the apartment, when, seizing the hands of Lady Ann and Fanny, she introduced them, not merely by name, but as the relict and daughter of the late Mr. Fitz-York.

"To you, ladies," she continued, "I present a near relation, in the person of Mr. O'Brian, whose *inflexibility*, *stubbornness*, and *haughty pride*, originated that resentment, which, in fact, had no solid foundation, since it derived its unnatural being from Mr. Fitz-York's marriage with the Right Honourable Lady Ann Grosvenor, to the exclusion of an Irish heiress, whom Mr. O'Brian wished to introduce into his family; fancying himself, no doubt, a better judge of what would constitute another's happiness than the person most deeply interested; and who, from his uncle's account, was a man the least likely of all others to make a rash or an imprudent choice. I believe I have said nearly all the *good* I know of this gentleman; and, doubt-

less you are much prepossessed by the *amiability* of his character; if not, he must worm himself into your esteem by the same arts which he has, I am ashamed to say, successfully practised upon me. But, I believe, I have not entirely finished the cunning lesson this man of much design imposed upon me. Since, the unhappy union I have mentioned, and which caused such opposition of sentiment, the relations never met; and the false drawing made of your Ladyship and Frances, by people interested in the family estrangement, prevented all wish or desire of knowing more of you than merely that you existed; and even that was matter of indifference, until Tuesday evening, when a friend requested his company to the city ball.——What shall I say more?"

"That the surprise at finding myself," replied Mr. O'Brian, "in company with such near relations, and the terms of love, respect, and admiration, with which all tongues spoke of them, convinced me I had been a fool and a dupe; at the same time I exclaimed, I will be a fool and a dupe no

longer! The widow and the daughter of my once idolized Frank, shall henceforth be the children of my affections; if they will not accompany me to the land of my forefathers, I will settle my affairs in Ireland, and live either with them, or as near as a house can be procured."

"But who, my dear Sir," said her Ladyship, "can have taken the trouble of appropriating to Fanny and myself characters, it appears, we do not deserve? I thought we had been too insignificant for general calumny, and surely we are unknown to your Irish connections."

"A well made-up falsehood, my dear niece, will gain as much credit as though it were dressed in the garb of truth; and a person's greatest enemies are sometimes those of his own house. I have relations, both here and in my own land, who rejoiced more at Frank's disobedience, than I was at the time aware of; and when he died in comparative poverty, owing, as was said, to his inveterate love of gaming, and his wife's careless extravagance—I no longer regretted

an oath taken in the heat of passion, that neither he, his wife, or children, should inherit any part of that immense property once intended for his sole use. Vows made in the hour of resentment always carry their own punishment. Mine, now I am acquainted with the worth of my grand-niece, weigh me down with shame and contrition; but to lay perjury to my soul would only heighten my guilt, and increase my punishment here and hereafter."

Fanny seized the hand of Mr. O'Brian, and imprinting upon it the kiss of filial love, assured him the countenance and regard of so respectable a relative were more precious than hoards of wealth without it. "I have so few natural connections," she continued, "and amongst those few some who despise the affinity, that words of kindred affection and kindness sink into my heart, and overpower me with sensations of delight. Give your worldly property, my dear uncle, to the worldly-minded; we have enough for happiness; since true felicity, I have heard my honoured parent say,

more frequently inhabits a modest and frugal retirement, than the splendid palaces, and castellated mansions of the prince and the noble."

Lady Ann's eyes overflowed with mingled sensations of pain and pleasure. Pain, that she was withheld from clearing her husband's memory from the disgraceful stigma, and want of principle, the life of a gamester is justly branded with; for how otherwise could their present apparent poverty be accounted for? And pleasure, to witness the disinterested delight of her darling child, on the acquisition of a relative, who, though he abounded in wealth, frankly acknowledged *that* wealth could never benefit *her*. Some defence was certainly due to the late Mr. Fitz-York; and whilst her Ladyship avoided all retrospect or mention of property, she did ample justice to his virtues as a man—a father—a husband—and assured his uncle, he had never given her a moment's pain or uneasiness till the fatal hour which brought him home a corpse.

Mrs. Bloomfield, who had more feeling in

her way, than many of the fine ladies who affect it, perceiving the difficulty Lady Ann laboured under to suppress her tears; turned the conversation, by hoping her Ladyship would conform to Lady Milford's wish of presenting Fanny on the ensuing court-day.

"By all means," replied Mr. O'Brian.—Her connections on both sides fully warrant such an introduction. In my time—I know not how the court may be altered—beauty and merit—not money—were the loadstones of attraction; and of this I am sure, there will not be a lovelier girl at St. James's, though there may be a richer."

Fanny, unused to hear her person extolled, blushed at the old gentleman's direct attack; but Lady Ann saved her the pain of a reply, by consulting the widow upon a style of dress, wherein neatness, economy, and elegance, might be so happily blended, as not to disgrace Lady Milford, nor draw upon themselves the imputation of extravagance. Mrs. Bloomfield, perhaps less skilled in dress than any female of her day, recommended an appeal to the Countess upon the prudent and

the proper; and the important point was agreed to be left to her Ladyship's decision; after Mr. O'Brian had declared, that but for the interference of his unnatural denunciation, Miss Fitz-York's dress should have vied in splendour with those of the royal family.

Mrs. Bloomfield and Mr. O'Brian had scarcely left the room, when Lady Ann's protegée, the highwayman, requested an audience. His appearance bespoke hurry and anxiety—his countenance was flushed and agitated—and, forgetting the usual ceremonious good manners, with which he at all times addressed his benefactress, he exclaimed, "I am just come from Bow-street!"

There was something unaccountably dissonant to her Ladyship's feelings in this address. Bow-street and the present speaker seemed, thus united, to threaten infamy, disgrace, and death; for, in the terror of the moment, it never once occurred, that had matters been as she suspected, the penitent culprit could not have been the bearer of such evil tidings, nor at large to publish his own mishap. But this natural idea never

once entered her imagination, and the words "I am just come from Bow-street!" she thought admitted but of one interpretation.

Mr. Strictland's feelings towards the young man were somewhat less irritable than her Ladyship's, consequently his judgment was more clear and unembarrassed. He neither saw nor imagined danger; curiosity, indeed, was strongly excited by the manner, more than the words, and he requested an explanation.

"Passing through Covent-garden market this morning," began the narrator, "on the business you, Sir, employed me upon, a crowd at Bow-street office attracted my attention; and enquiring if any thing particular had drawn together such a concourse of people, I gathered that a lady of fashion was undergoing an examination. Curiosity prompted me to enter; but judge my surprise, when I found the person so situated to be one of the females from whom I surreptitiously obtained the purse now in your possession.' He then recounted the proceedings, of which our reader is already in possession, and continued, "I hope right

and justice would have made me acknowledge the real offender, had I not given my solemn promise to you, my saviours from perdition, to take no one step in the business without your especial knowledge, nor was I sorry, as the examination proceeded, to find myself so bound, for a systematic scene of perjury was disclosed, which I alone could prove; and finding ingratitude added to my other crimes—than which there is not one so heinous in the catalogue of my vices—and that the wretch who falsely bore witness against me, was likely, not only to escape punishment, but, in all probability, receive reward; for bribery alone could have produced such testimony; I, unguardedly, in the fervor of the moment, declared the witness perjured, and promised to be forthcoming on the morrow to prove it, without considering, that by implicating the man and his confederates, I am exposing myself to that punishment I justly deserve, but am anxious to avoid."

"Might not Mrs. Stokes recollect your

person as readily as you recognised her's?" asked Mr. Strictland.

"Impossible," replied Lady Ann. "When he attacked the chaise his face was partially covered; and the after scene at Bath presented an object so pale and woe-begone, from loss of blood and agony of mind—so different from the countenance, now calm with recovered virtue, and florid with restored health—that, I am convinced, I should have been deceived, had I not beheld him in the interim. But how can the affair be managed without subjecting this repentant youth to obloquy?"

"The sitting magistrate," replied the benevolent merchant, "is my particular friend; and by placing unreserved confidence in him, I fancy the business may be settled, without his appearing at all. Did Mrs. Stokes hear distinctly your name and place of abode?"

"I delivered them to the magistrate in writing."

"I am glad you took that precaution. She and her artful lawyer are following a crooked path, which must end in their destruction.

They are wandering in the dark; but the light will break upon them to their confusion. You may retire, young man, and, I trust, this is the last danger you have to apprehend from the same cause. There is *policy* in virtue, if we are taught to look to nothing beyond; for vice, though law should never reach it, finds whips and stings in our own bosoms, and every offence carries its punishment along with it."

* * * * *

The Honourable Leslie Talbot, Major Collingwood, Captain Corbett, and the Clerical Adonis, omitted not the customary call in Lombard-street. But their cards alone were received; since Lady Ann, as we have said, admitted no visitors the day after the ball, in compliment to the domestic sorrows of Mr. Cavendish. The two former gentlemen left town immediately on a pleasurable excursion; the latter had forborne to repeat his visit; but Captain Corbett was not so easily discouraged. Under one pretence or other, he made daily calls in the city, and certainly his company annoyed no one, ex-

cept the lady he was most anxious to please. He was plausible—conciliating—perfectly a man of the world—and, as he never languished, nor acted the love-sick swain before her Ladyship or Mr. Strictland, they placed Fanny's antipathy to the score of caprice; although this was the first instance in which she had exhibited such a disposition, and allowed, for once in their lives, that their idol had a failing in common with her sex.

But though he distinguished not our heroine by more than common civility, whilst the eyes of her mother and guardian were upon him; whenever he caught them in a different direction, he made ample amends by those dying looks, and melting glances she so well described at their first interview, and which he thought possessed powers of facination, because a few vain and silly females had confessed as much. That Fanny the little rustic could resist them, he had not calculated upon, and was not at all disposed to submit to a circumstance so mortifying. Difficulty enhances desire in pursuits of this kind, as well as in those of a more

noble nature; and the Captain was heard to declare that no discouragement should relax his endeavours, till he had brought the disdainful girl to a level with those who thought him irresistible. He was convinced from past experience of the power of perseverance; and as Fanny surpassed her female companions in beauty, his desire to make a conquest rose in proportion.

The Queen's Court day, so long anxiously anticipated by those young sprigs of fashion, who fancy no earthly felicity can equal a presentation, at length arrived. But it brought no joy to our heroine. Timidity painted the ceremony in colours so awfully opaque, that had there been a possibility of escaping, she would gladly have relinquished the honour, and yielded the pleasure to those more sensible of its charms; and who find it in scenes far removed from any which education and habit had endeared to her.

Lady Milford and Mrs. Bloomfield laughed at her fears, and assured her the foundation on which they rested was so fragile, that one word breathed through regal lips would blow

them away,—one smile from the countenance of royalty, disperse the cloud which hung with such density upon her brow.

As there had been no public Court for a considerable length of time, the presentations of the youthful nobility and gentry were numerous beyond all former precedent; and Fanny was led to the presence by Lady Milford, at the moment the Duchess of Newland and her daughters were quitting it. A smile of recognition escaped the three ladies, but our young novice could not by any effort return it. Peace and gaiety, which were wont to revel in her eye, and dimple round her mouth, had given place to an uneasy dread of something—she knew not what—that blanched her cheek with fear; and took such firm possession of her faculties, that had her life depended upon a smile, it would have been of that forced and ghastly kind in which pleasure bears no part.

I dare say my youthful female readers will think me unpardonably deficient if I omit the description of our heroine's dress on this grand occasion. I once hoped the newspapers

would have anticipated me, but guess my mortification, when the one I daily take was served up with my breakfast, to find no mention whatever made of Miss Fitz-York. I waded twice through the monotonous description of Court costume, and court presentations, without finding my favourite Fanny's person, dress, or behaviour noticed; although the former and the latter were, according to my old-fashioned judgment, unrivalled that day at St. James's; and had her attire and reputed fortune borne any proportion, the sycophantic newspaper hirelings would have been redundantly inflated in her praise. But not possessing these extrinsic advantages, she was incorporated with the undistinguished crowd of nobodys, and I am obliged to announce, otherwise my readers might justly think I was ashamed of her appearance, that the robe worn on this occasion was composed of white crape, wrought with bugles in a tasteful pattern of her own invention; and that it was noticed by the Princesses for its elegance and simplicity. The court appendage, y'clept a hoop, which

usage has rendered indispensable, might have been omitted with advantage, had custom so willed it: for of all the unnatural deformities which the caprice of fashion has at various times invented, the whalebone petticoat is the most unwieldy, the least easily managed, and grace is no longer grace, so encumbered; nor has elegance that decided advantage it would naturally obtain over awkwardness, when not equallized by the rotund circumference which places them nearly upon a level.

"Who is that interesting stranger?" escaped the Royal matron's lips, as Fanny and her chaprone advanced. "York—Clarence—Cambridge—do any of you know her?" A bow of negation was all the answer, for Lady Milford now began the usual ceremony of introduction. But the question had been heard by Fanny, and suffused her before colourless cheeks with a carnation that set rouge at defiance, and added a lustre to her full blue eye which gave the beholders an idea of something more than human.

Her Majesty, as usual, was condescend-

ingly kind, and gained Fanny's heart by reverting to the times when Lady Ann and Mr. Fitz-York graced the British Court; regretting her Ladyship's absence on the present occasion; and hoping her daughter would not merely shew herself as a meteor to dazzle the beholders for an instant, but rather resemble those bright constellations which regularly shed their influence and cheer us by their constancy.

Fanny endeavoured to answer the considerate kindness evidently intended to raise her in her own estimation; and though the attempt fell far short of her wishes, it more than answered the expectations of the circle; who not knowing her, formed their conjectures upon the oppressive modesty of her first appearance; without considering that a gem is sometimes hid beneath, of more sterling worth than those gaudy, shewy, but valueless ornaments, which the daughters of effrontery are fain to substitute.

Miss Fitz-York was not more flattered by the Queen's-condescension, than the politeness of the younger branches of Royalty:

to whom her Majesty most graciously recommended her; and with whom, she and Lady Milford continued some time in conversation.

The feelings of our heroine on this memorable occasion, may not inaptly be compared to those of a young bather; who shrinks and trembles at the water's edge; but after the first plunge wonders at his groundless fears, and in proportion to the anticipated pain. So it was with Fanny. The first fright over, she was easy and composed; could look round without much embarrassment; and even meet the eye of Lady Mountcastle, turned scornfully upon — whilst in her breast raged envy and jealousy at the distinction bestowed upon such an insignificant—without being overwhelmed by its confident stare. In the amiable Maria's countenance she beheld pleasure, not unmixed with anxiety, that her mother's presence prevented further intercourse than could be conveyed by a smiling nod of congratulation, on account of that distinguished honour

which filled the contracted mind of the Countess with rancour.

Behind Lady Mountcastle stood an object "so pale, so wan, so woe begone; so spiritless—dejected—and uncourtier like; for courtiers can smile, and smile, and be great—hypocrites; that Fanny would have merely wondered to see so ungenial a mind amidst the seemingly happy group, had not she at the same moment recollected, though alas! how changed! her once gay, sprightly fellow-traveller, Mr. Moseley—afterwards her animated elegant cousin Lord Moseley—but now, more unlike either than any difference which formerly distinguished the two. His eyes were stedfastly fixed as though to gaze on her, and her alone, was the sole end of their formation. They were hollow and heavy, and the general character of his countenance bespoke such inward wretchedness, that Fanny, moved by sympathy, became nearly as wretched as himself. At the moment she discovered him, a group, consisting of the Duchess and her daughters, her nephew Leslie Talbot, Sir Herbert Huntley, and Cap-

tain Corbett, had joined Lady Milford; whose joyous and contented looks formed so striking a contrast with the love-lorn Moseley, that our heroine uttered an involuntary exclamation, fortunately not loud enough to be heard beyond her own immediate party, but in them it created surprize strongly mixed with curiosity.

Their first idea was connected with indisposition ; but following the direction of her eye, Lady Milford and Sir Herbert discovered Moseley, though scarcely the shadow of his former self. To some remark of his sisters he returned a languid smile, but it apparently arose more from the natural complacency of his nature, than any pleasure the subject afforded ; for without reply he sunk into his former inanity ; the continued direction of his visual orbs alone denoting that he felt interested by surrounding objects.

Lady Milford was greatly shocked at the alteration a few short weeks had made in her favorite, and could not restrain a sigh and a look of reproach at our heroine as the cause. Corbett looked and sighed too ; but his were

the enamoured glances and breathings of passion; he likewise in a voice scarcely above a whisper, but soft, mellifluous, and tender, enquired with solicitous earnestness, "what could discompose the harmony of a countenance whose specific character was too celestial to be affected by common objects?"

"Perhaps," interrupted Leslie Talbot archly, "that young man is no *common object.* Enviable youth! Who would not with joy become the victim of ill health, if a cadaverous aspect could recommend him to the notice of Miss York? I for one, would consent to keep my bed for a month, and be drenched though the whole materia medica, if such a look and manner might reward my return to society. What say you, Huntley?"

"I say that to be the object of Miss Fitz-York's solicitude, would tempt a man to works of greater supererogation than your sick bed, though surrounded by half a dozen Pharmacopolists. But, my dear Sir, unless we could transform ourselves into the *relative* situation of that interesting young Lord, and like him, claim the near privilege of *consanguinity*, I fear

pale looks would rather be an obstacle, than a recommendation to favour.

The royal family now left the drawing room, when Lady Milford committed her protegée to the care of the Duchess, and asking the Captain if he would attend her; proposed to join Lady Mountcastle and Maria. "Certainly," replied Corbett, "if your Ladyship wishes it."

"Nay, my good Sir, I thought I was promoting *your* wishes by the request; *I* can have no desire for your company on my *own* account." She then accepted the offered hand of Sir Herbert Huntley, and crossed over to her sister-in-law.

"Is that young Lord, my dear, the Earl of Mountcastle's heir?" enquired her Grace.

"He is, madam," replied Fanny, "but so altered during a short absence, that surprise must account for the oddness of my behaviour. I should scarcely have recollected him, if the Countess and Lady Maria had not been of his party.

"I would I were a pale-faced cousin!" said Leslie with much drollery, "provided this

young lady feels an interest in all her sick relations; but I should bar all partiality that did not include myself."

"What say you, my dear?" rejoined her Grace, "can you conscientiously recommend this mad-cap to Lady Maria? He has no other chance for the appellation he seems to covet; and as to a pale face, it will come in due time, if he follow the example of his dissipated companions."

Lady Milford now returned, and they were preparing to depart, when Fanny's hand, which she was presenting to Corbett, was seized with a degree of violence that made her start; and looking up, she found the supposed aggressor in the person of Moseley. He squeezed her fingers with almost convulsive eagerness, hurried her across the room, unmindful of Corbett's beginning expostulation—and, as if to escape was his only object, stopped not until they reached the stairs; when observing the door of an empty apartment open, he dragged her in, and falling on his knees, franticly exclaimed, "Fanny, you have undone me! You, and your dear mis-

taken parent have driven me to the verge of the precipice, and this interview decides my fate as far as respects the present world."

"Oh rise, my Lord, and say not so!" exclaimed the affrighted girl; many are the claims upon you, independent of so insignificant a being as myself! Your family, your friends, your country, have a right in you; and would you rob them of that right, merely because one trifling obstacle thwarts your wishes, which probably, if overcome, might not confer happiness to the extent you are led to suppose? At present you are blinded by passion; but let reflection resume her rights—call reason and religion to your aid—and you will think on the present scene as of an uneasy vision which sleep presents as real and substantial, but which our waking moments convicts of fallacy and imposition."

"All—all—," exclaimed Moseley, "on which man builds his happiness, is fallacy and imposition! There is nothing true—nothing permanent, but misery—that is real

and substantial; but it is at our own option to bear, or cast it off."

"Oh! no, my Lord!" replied Fanny; "man has no option where life is concerned. It is a loan, not to be returned until demanded. A loan so precious, that when accompanied with misery, poverty, slavery, or sickness, the receiver pays it back with reluctance, though with it he parts with every evil flesh is heir to. Wretchedness is only immediate; let a few years or months, nay days, elapse, and we wonder why such and such things weighed us down with sorrow. Try the experiment, my dear cousin, for a limited time, say a year, and if, at the termination of that period, you agree not with me, perhaps I may be a convert to your doctrine."

"You, Miss Fitz-York, are incompetent to judge of my situation, for you argue with a mind at ease. But go, inflexible girl, triumph in the misery you have caused——"

"Hark!" interrupted Fanny, "I hear Lady Milford's voice! For pity's sake lead me to her! If found secreted in such a

place—at such a time—I tremble to think what erroneous conclusions might be drawn, though my companion were proved to be my cousin." She then hastily advanced to the door; but seeing a crowd upon the stairs, was retreating, when Corbett, just then passing, exclaimed, "Miss Fitz-York!" Fanny, in the terror of the moment at being thus surprised, shrunk back, and inadvertently cried, "Hush!" at the same time closing the door, though not before he had caught a glimpse of her companion.

Tears of mortification and wounded pride rushed into her eyes, as she exclaimed, "Now, my Lord, you may triumph in return! The female it was your relative duty to protect, and whom you pretend to love, independent of kindred, is reduced, by your frantic and irregular conduct, to the shame necessarily and properly attached to clandestine proceedings. Could I have escaped from this place without the humiliation of a discovery, I should have blamed your rash and, I must say, improper behaviour; but my

character is now exposed to obloquy and disgrace, and there is no foreseeing where the mischief may stop. Captain Corbett——"

"Dare not——must not make any improper observations. Your honour is dearer to me—much dearer than life—for of that I am weary—and I will defend it against Corbett, or the whole world. You have now, without intending it, given me a motive for existence, and to your fame it shall be exclusively devoted."

"Preserve it, my Lord, for a nobler purpose. The reputation that depends upon extraneous aid, claims no suffrage from me; the fame I covet, must live by its own vitality, and not upon opinions, fallible, erroneous, and without a settled standard. But the company are ere now dispersed, and if your Lordship will see me to my chair, and conduct me to Lady Milford, if she still waits, I can explain this business, I doubt not, to her satisfaction, though never to my own."

"And will you leave me without any certainty of seeing you again? On my knees

I conjure you———." At that moment Corbett put his head within the half-closed door; but would have retreated on seeing the prostrate Moseley, had not Fanny, whose face was towards him, begged he would enter and relieve her from the embarrassment of her situation. Mean time his Lordship started up, and, in a haughty and resolute tone, asked, by what authority he—a stranger—dared to intrude, where he must be consious he was unwelcome.

"To your Lordship I may be unwelcome," replied Corbett; "but Miss Fitz-York has allowed my intrusion, as you are pleased to call it, to be most opportune; since it relieves her from a confessed embarrassment, of which your Lordship is the cause. To you, Madam, and to you only, I make an apology for what may appear impertinent; but will cease to be so, when I announce myself the messenger of Lady Milford, who waits below, and has deputed me to conduct you to her." He was taking her hand, when Moseley rushed between them, and loudly vociferated his right—and

his alone—to conduct his cousin into the presence of his aunt. "To you, Sir," he continued, "'tis honour enough to have been Lady Milford's *messenger*, without arrogating any right to be Miss Fitz-York's *protector*." He now seized Fanny's trembling hand, and was leading her down stairs, when Corbett exclaimed, "This is the second insult your Lordship has offered me in the presence of this Lady, and, unless you make an apology that a gentleman can accept, I have no hesitation in calling you a poltroon."—

"A what, Sir!"

"The word was intelligible; but to make it more so, I repeat, a *pitiful* poltroon!"

A blow from his Lordship, followed by a scream from Fanny, brought Sir Herbert Huntley and Lady Milford, attended by several domestics, to the foot of the stairs; when they beheld the innocent cause of this affray, her garments covered with blood, and lifeless, in the arms of Moseley; whilst Corbett, foaming with rage and vexation, was applying an handkerchief, steeped in the

same sanguinary stream, to his mouth and nostrils. The Countess, shocked at the appearance of her beloved niece, and ashamed of such an exposure, under the roof which ought to have been privileged, instead of being made the scene of broils and bloodshed—for she too clearly guessed the nature, though not the extent, of the mischief—with a look of indignation at the two gentlemen, regretted her acquaintance with the one, and her consanguinity to the other, since neither of them knew the respect due to a female under her care. And, as Fanny began to shew signs of returning life, she requested Sir Herbert to take charge of her; and having seen them to their carriage, endeavour to mediate, and, if possible, amicably adjust the difference too apparent in the angry looks and haughty gestures of his Lordship and the Captain.

But when the Baronet endeavoured, with much tenderness, to release Fanny from his supporting arms, Moseley bade him, in no very gentle tone, to desist, and suffer himself, who had the greatest right, to see her safe

to Lady Milford's carriage. "You, Sir," addressing the Captain, "know me, I presume; if so, you likewise know where I am to be found. Your name, I understand, is Corbett—Captain Corbett."

"Of the Guards. Any letter or message will find me at the Cocoa-tree."

These words passed as his Lordship and the Baronet were supporting our heroine, more dead than alive, down stairs; and, having placed the ladies in their carriage, Moseley, understanding Sir Herbert was following them into the City, ordered his coachman home, and, without invitation or apology, threw himself into Huntley's chariot.

Pride is an inherent and a universal principle; but its operations are so various, that a common observer will frequently mistake it for a different passion. In the representative of the Grosvenor family, it was inflated, consequential, imperious, and tyrannical; in Lady Mountcastle it had all the former annoying qualities, blended with meanness and cunning; in Lady Ann Fitz-

York and Moseley; it was dignified, impulsive, stimulating to what was great and noble, and sensibly alive to insult and injustice. Moseley fancied himself the victim of the latter, and a conscious pride of not deserving it—a determination to bear his doom with as much composure as his lacerated feelings would allow—actuated his mind during the last interview in Lombard-street. How far he succeeded my readers already know; but they are yet to learn, how feeble were his resolves, when opposed to a passion that preyed upon his vitals, and seemed to exclude every ray of future happiness. It was pride of conscious *deserving*, which supported him during the interview;—it was pride *offended*, which bore him up at his departure; but with the cause, the effect ceased, and love, the most omnipotent passion of the soul, took full and unrivalled possession of his faculties.

To inhabit the same latitude—to breath the same atmosphere—without the usual intercourse, was impossible. The watering places held forth no temptation, for there he

should be annoyed with company, and to avoid society was his determined plan. To mention his intended evasion, would subject him to enquiries he was ill prepared to answer, and remonstrances he was not in the humour to hear. Accordingly, he drove from Lombard-street to the Livery-stables, where his horses were kept, and posted with the speed of a pursued felon to his hunting-lodge in Hampshire; from whence, a letter conveyed some trifling excuse for his absence, and an order for his own immediate attendant to join him without delay. Mental agony and exacerbation, unrelieved by social intercourse and friendly confidence, produced the illness which debilitated him, as we have already seen; and nothing but a peremptory order from the Earl to be present at the Drawing-room, could have brought him, late the preceding evening, to a place rendered hateful by past suffering, and promising no hope of alleviation.

The Countess and his father were greatly shocked at the change in Moseley's person, for they were proud of their son; but Maria

sobbed upon his neck, and nearly fainted at the sight. From his parents the cause was concealed; but with his sister he had no reserve; to her, as to another self, he copiously unfolded his tale of misery; depicted the rise and progress of his passion—his hopes—his fears—and final disappointment—ending by an assurance, that life was a burthen he could not long support, since all prospect of happiness had faded from his view, "and who," he emphatically exclaimed, "can bear to be a wretch for ever!"

Maria, with all a sister's tenderness, soothed his grief, and endeavoured to pour the balm of consolation into his wounded bosom.—"Live, my dear George," she continued, "for my sake; let us be all the world to each other, and think no more of love, nor its deceitful semblance: for, with shame I confess, the specious arts of an hypocrite have too successfully practised upon my peace; but I have more pride than to break my heart for the ingrate, and more resolution than to surrender finally to the attacks of a mere pretender."

"Do I know the wretch who has wronged you?"

"Think not of him; he is beneath *my* anger, or *your* resentment."

"Nay, but I *do* know him. 'Tis that villain Corbett. His practices where women are concerned, are infamous; and he has, if report lie not, more than once deserved the chastisement I shall not fail to bestow whenever we meet."

"My dear George! this thoughtless communication will make me miserable, if any consequences follow. I was merely induced to the discovery by a wish to turn the current of your thoughts; but if your precious life be put in competition with so unworthy an opponent, I shall never forgive the egotism which caused it. Promise to forget the circumstance, and to treat Corbett with the silent contempt he merits"

"I cannot pledge myself upon so delicate a subject as a sister's wrongs: my conduct must be governed by circumstances; but this I promise, not to seek *him*. If he intrude into *my* presence, or by any, the slightest

inuendo, give the world cause to reflect upon *you*, I will pull his nose, although it should be in the drawing-room of my sovereign, whither to-morrow I am to be dragged sorely against my will. What have such spiritless beings as I to do with Courts? Unless, indeed, my shadowy figure and emaciated vissage should act as a *memento mori*, and put the giddy throng in mind of their latter end. But come, my dear girl, I am keeping you from your repose; my rest, alas! is destroyed for ever!"

With a heavy sigh, and a look of anguish, he quitted Maria's dressing-room; but sleep, which for several weeks had made only transient and interrupted calls, favoured him not this night with a single visit. To his own wretchedness was now added the wrongs of a sister, and the vigils of the night were succeeded by that ghastly paleness, which shocked, and nearly overcame our heroine at the drawing-room.

To meet Fanny at St. James's was a measure entirely unexpected; and the pale hue of her expressive countenance, added such

an interest to her appearance, that Moseley, in any other presence, would have flown to her on the wings of love and hope; for was it not possible their reciprocally altered looks might proceed from the same cause? and, if so, would Lady Ann be still inflexible? In this train of thinking he was deeply engaged, when our heroine's restored complexion, and the playful vivacity of her manner, convinced him that love, at least the love he coveted, had no share in the transient alteration.

Both the carriages stopped in Lombard-street nearly at the same moment; but Lady Milford, with that consideration which ever marked her character, preceded the rest of the party to save Lady Ann the shock her daughter's sanguinary appearance might otherwise produce. The caution, however, being confined to Fanny, proved unavailing, for when she was led into the room by Moseley, pale, ghastly, and disordered, her Ladyship's exclamation almost amounted to a shriek, as rushing towards her, he threw himself on his knees, and hid his face in her

lap. Compassion and astonishment were so strongly excited, that words were denied, until the Countess, with equal presence of mind and good-humour, rang the bell, and ordered dinner to be served. This reminded Lady Ann of the morning's abstinence and fatigue, and, after thanking her Ladyship, she continued, "Rise, my dear nephew, and compose yourself. After our repast, of which, I hope, you will partake, I must be informed of the nature of the disorder which has thus visibly reduced you; and, perhaps, an old woman's prescription, though ridiculed by the faculty, may not be altogether inefficacious. In the country we are found useful, and a Doctress in full practice may sometimes be preferred to a male practitioner without that advantage."

Fanny, who had retired to disencumber herself of her hoop, joined them not again till dinner was announced, which Lady Milford and the Baronet endeavoured to render as cheerful as circumstances would allow. But maugre their endeavours, it was the most melancholy meal Fanny ever remem-

bered, and one to which the least honour was paid. Lady Ann and Mr. Strictland recommended the various dishes, and carved and dissected with their accustomed skill; the Countess and Sir Herbert praised the cookery, and endeavoured to set a good example; but all proved vain; feeling had destroyed appetite, and no effort could restore it.

When the servants had withdrawn, Lady Ann invited Moseley to a tête-à-tête in her dressing room, and Lady Milford had notice that her woman waited her commands in Miss Fitz-York's apartment. "Lead the way then, Frances, " replied her Ladyship, the papers speak loudly in praise of Court dresses, for their beauty and elegance; d they ought to possess some advantages, to make amends to the weaver for their want of *comfort*. I never so truly feel the luxury of a robe de chambre as on the evening of a Court-day."

Mr. Strictland being left alone with the Baronet, was anxious for an elucidation of Fanny's stained dress, and Lord Moseley's

altered looks; to which he received all the information Sir Herbert was empowered to give, but that amounted to very little. "Moseley" he continued, "never opened his lips during our drive, except once to imprecate Corbett, against whom he shews an aversion altogether unaccountable. The town indeed has affianced him to Lady Maria, but that simply, could never have produced the scene we witnessed this morning; had he paid lover-like attentions to Miss Fitz-York, Moseley's irritation would have been naturally accounted for, but it now carries an air of perplexity I am by no means competent to explain."

The party soon afterwards assembled in the drawing-room, but Moseley did not appear to have received much comfort from his aunt's conversation. He was still low and spiritless, nor could all Lady Milford's good-humoured raillery, though she outdid herself in order to raise the spirits of the company, produce a single smile; and when the carriages were announced, a separation seemed to

give general relief to those, who never hitherto parted without regret.

Lady Ann's conference with her nephew was equally decisive as the last; but it now assumed a feature of more tenderness arising from physical associations. To have shewn anger or resentment towards such a combination of bodily debility would have been as little consonant with her Ladyship's character, as to accept of the family reference which he strongly urged. "I decidedly object," she observed, "to the appeal you speak of; not merely because I know it would be unavailing: Were it possible it could be otherwise, my concurrence would never be obtained to a union *suffered* but not *solicited*. Miss Fitz-York must never *so* enter *any* family. Lady Mountcastle and I are already too closely allied; unless our minds were more in unison, a nearer connexion would only increase the discord, and cause endless vibrations, as ungrateful to the ear, as repugnant to every sentiment that bears upon peace or domestic comfort. I am concerned on your account, my dear George, that feeling and propriety

are so much at variance; but the unwelcome truth takes you not by surprise. You have long known both my *sentiments* and my determined *resolution*; and had you timely acted upon them, much, I think I may say, all your present misery would have been spared, and our happiness greatly increased by the social intercourse which existing circumstances now necessarily forbid. You are at present corporeally weak, in consequence of your recent illness; the mind naturally sympathizes with the body, and for the moment loses its tone and energy; but the restoration of one, will be the recovery of both, and reason having leave to act, will point out the futility of grasping at shadows? the weakness of wishing for what is unattainable; and the possibility of happiness, independent of your cousin. Love is not the imperious passion romantic boys and girls are apt to paint it; in well-regulated minds it is subject to reason, and under the controul of virtue. I have felt much conscious pleasure in the ties that unite us; my nephew has hitherto been my pride and

boast; and I trust this single weakness will not have power to destroy his claims; but that, rising superior to mere sense, and the at present weakened powers of imagination, he will confirm the good opinion of one, who feels disposed to respect as much as she loves him."

Moseley continued the argument by shifting his ground within the precincts of his own immediate happiness. Egotism was generally speaking foreign to his Lordship's character; but despair of working upon Lady Ann's feelings by any engine less powerful than pity, induced the trial; and had not her child's honour and future peace been dearer than her own, he would have succeeded. *That* point, however, distanced every other consideration, and left Lord Moseley's eloquence so far behind, that little hope remained of ever reaching the wished for goal; and that little depended upon contingencies so remote and improbable, that a mind less energetic—a disposition less sanguine and prolific, would have given up the cause in despair.

CHAP. V.

THE HIGHWAYMAN IDENTIFIED.—A FORGERY FULLY PROVED.—THE SINGLE MARRIED, AND THE MARRIED SINGLE.

THE Counsel retained in the cause Stokes and Leigh, versus the Earl of Milford, as executor of Fredrick Grosvenor; was a man calculated to further Mrs. Stokes's plans, although he had been unequivocally informed of the forgery. But this Brierly carefully concealed; fully aware that a secret is safer in the keeping of two, than if more widely divulged; and that practices which involve both reputation and life should be hidden from the world with the most scrupulous care; since reputation—at least the appearance of it—renders life more valuable, even to those whose conscience gives the lie to the smiling imposture conveyed by the countenance.

In Mr. Archer, Lord Milford's man of business, the most perfect intelligence united with the greatest probity. Suspicions he certainly had of foul play, but they were unsubstantiated; all his researches could not prove actual guilt; and unless their own conduct at the trial convicted them, he despaired of a successful issue.

Character was decidedly against the plaintiff Stokes and her Attorney, for the suborned perjury was a theme of universal discussion; but he was too liberal to wish a jury should be swayed by that circumstance, and too tender to urge it in any case. A few days, however, would terminate his uncertainty, and Lord Milford's vexation; and whether the cause was carried for, or against him, was a matter of perfect indifference to the Peer; all his Lordship's exacerbation arising from the vulgarity of his opponents, and the little likelihood there once appeared of the Earl of Milford's name coming in contact with that of Hannah Stokes and her illegitimate offspring.

Brierly having been successful in obtaining

bail for himself and his client, on the Bow-Street business, Mrs. Stokes determined to be in Court during the trial, which was to secure her a competence independent of controul, and enable her to return to that country where females, with the advantage of a tolerable person, are sought after with an avidity unknown in these cold phlegmatic regions; and where she knew there remained many wealthy superannuated dotards, out of whom her meridian charms could extract the spark of desire, which by good management would rekindle the torch of Hymen, and place her in a situation elevated as her own ambition.

Castle building is perhaps the most pleasurable employment of the mind. Beyond a doubt it caused a truly felicitous sensation in the bosom of Hannah Stokes; but her fabric was erected on a sandy foundation, and fell by the very means employed to raise it. On the day destined to make, or mar her fortune for ever, this woman of enterprize appeared in the Court of King's Bench, accompanied by her son, so called, and both dressed with the nicest care and circumspection.

Brierly and her Counsel, the quibbling, cunning sophister Bramble, took their places in full confidence of success: and indeed the claims of his Clients were so clearly made out by the latter—nobody denying the signature of Frederick Grosvenor—that the judge couldonly wonder defendant's Counsel would suffer the cause to be brought into Court. "Have you any thing to allege, Mr. Serjeant," continued he, "why judgment should not go against Defendant?"

"Nothing, my lord, in the case of Plaintiff Stokes. But the other party, Frederick Leigh, must be produced before we can award him the sum mentioned in the Bond."

"Have you any doubt of his existence?"

"We doubt his identity, my lord. The person Stokes brings forward as her son we have reason to suppose an impostor."

Brierly, to hide his confusion, pretended to be taking minutes; but Bramble, unconscious of the deception, enquired upon what grounds the imposture rested? The young gentleman, he believed, had been recognized by the late Mr. Grosvenor as his son; indeed

the Bond clearly proved it; he had been liberally educated in full expectation of the ample provision made by his father, and who would be bold enough to deny his birth?

"I deny it," replied Mr. Strictland.

"This is coming to the point at once," rejoined Bramble, "but how a stranger, who appears to have dropt in by accident, can pretend to know *my* Client better than his own *Mother*, I cannot devise."

"I never said I knew him," replied Mr. Strictland. "On the contrary, I deny all knowledge of your *Client*, though I am intimately acquainted with *Frederick Leigh*; and will produce him to the confusion of the impostor and his abettors."

"You speak very decidedly," said Bramble; "but give me leave to observe, my lord, that if an imposition must attach somewhere, 'tis surely as natural to suppose *his* Frederick Leigh the impostor as ours, who comes before us under avowed maternal protection, and has the image of his father stamped upon his forehead."

"You knew the late Mr. Grosvenor, then?" observed the learned Serjeant.

"Oh! intimately," replied Bramble.

"And yet there are those," continued the Serjeant, "who say no two people were ever more unlike. But resemblance is in general so merely matter of opinion, that we waive that in your favour, although we do not allow the most striking similitude, often the work of chance, to prove descent. A mother's assertion would doubtless have great weight in a less interested case; but here her evidence comes in a questionable shape—in a form the most suspicious—self interest, and a thirst for gain."

"What other proof," interrogated the Judge, "have you that Plaintiff Leigh is the person mentioned in the Bond?"

"We are not," replied Bramble, "at present prepared to answer further on this point, not expecting any other evidence would be necessary; but, doubtless, many people may identify his person."

Mrs. Stokes, who dreaded procrastination, thought it necessary now to interfere; accordingly she rose, and, without the smallest embarrassment, introduced herself and her com-

panion, as the plaintiff in this action, and added, Lord Portman, who had been her son's travelling companion, would identify him.

Mr. Strictland was prepared for an appeal of this nature from the conversation held at Lord Milford's; and had prevailed upon the Nobleman in question to accompany him. "Fortunately," he replied, "Lord Portman is now in court; and will doubtless establish the supposed Fredrick Leigh's claims, or entirely set them aside. Have the goodness, my lord, to declare who and what that young man really is."

"Tom Smith, my ci-divant valet," replied his Lordship. "The lad has an aspiring genius, but I never dreamt his ambition would have soared to its present height. He quitted my service six months ago for practices not necessary now to divulge, but which prevented my giving him a character."

At the beginning of this speech, Mrs. Stokes with difficulty choked an exclamation which had risen to her tongue. But when his Lordship ceased, she loudly impeached his veracity, and declared them all

in a plot to wrong a helpless woman and her child. A strong hysteric, caused by mortified pride and vexation, followed, but her late supposed son, far from rendering assistance, made a precipitate retreat; and going straight to their lodging, dispossessed it of whatever was portable, and fled from the punishment his late imposture deserved, and Lord Portman's lenity had hitherto spared. Soon as the confusion occasioned by Mrs. Stokes's illness had subsided, Mr. Strictland asked leave to produce the real son of Mr. Grosvenor. When, behold! the poor deserted boy whose life or death, happiness or misery, were to his mother objects of indifference, until her late fraudulent intentions made his appearance necessary to further her plans, appeared in the person of the highwayman! Yes, courteous reader! the robber of Hannah Stokes—was Hannah Stokes's son!! The person to whom she owed all her late disgrace and shame, was the offspring of her former licentiousness!!!

Thus was the unnatural parent punished through the medium of her devoted child. —Justly punished for cruelty, whereby was

laid a train of evils that, in other circumstances, might have terminated fatally both to herself and the wronged object of her desertion.

Modest embarrassment, resulting from recollections the most painful, tinged the young man's cheeks. No information had hitherto met his ear that the female, whom he unlawfully dispossessed of her property, and whom mistaken restitution had subsequently involved in dishonour and infamy, was the being to whom he owed his existence, and who was now endeavouring, by deceit and imposition, to rob him of his birth-right. A contrariety of feelings, painfully oppressive, without one pleasurable tinge to soften their asperity, bowed him to the earth. His criminality, though unknown, or known to few, wanted that support which a conscience void of offence never seeks in vain. Though oppressed by worldly power, and scorned by worldly men, virtue and rectitude of conduct will keep the mind from sinking, and sustain the body with well-assured firmness; but Frederick Leigh,

by deviating from the paths of honesty, lost his own confidence; and oppressed with a sense of shame, and more than ever disgusted with the author of his existence, he looked the image of woe, and kept his eyes rivetted on the floor.

"What proof have we," enquired the Serjeant, "that this person is not likewise a cheat?"

"A round unvarnished tale," replied Mr. Strictland. "His name—and I would add, an uncommon resemblance to the late Mr. Grosvenor, if the learned Counsellor had not made the same observation in favour of an acknowledged impostor. I knew the deceased well—his sister, the Lady Ann Fitz-York, pronounces him her brother's *fac-simile*—his mother's evidence, I suppose, will not be admitted; but if any other person in court remembers Mr. Grosvenor, we are willing to abide by their decision."

Mr. Archer recollected him, and confessed the resemblance, although it was against the interest of his client.

"Since this very material point is settled

in our favour," said Counsellor Bramble, looking triumphantly at his adversaries; "it remains to shew cause why Stokes and Leigh may not claim upon the bond."

"I fear we must allow their claims," replied the Serjeant, "since all enquiry in the town of Beverley has failed in substantiating what, we had every reason to suppose, a forgery. The attorney and the two subscribing witnesses are dead; the clerk, who is said to have engrossed the deeds, has emigrated; and all who are acquainted with the hand-writing of the deceased, are obliged to own the signature. The bond in favour of Stokes seems to have had several words erased; but, on the nicest scrutiny, nothing appears substituted that makes either for or against us."

At the close of this speech, and whilst Brierly was addressing his Lordship, the Serjeant held the paper against the light, as if to examine the erasures more closely; when, to the surprise of the Court, he exclaimed, "The hidden things of darkness are, in a miraculous manner, brought to light! Kna-

very is foiled by its own weapons! For the very instrument used to facilitate this scheme of iniquity, cries aloud against them. Examine it, my Lord. The bonds are dated several years before the rags which formed this paper went into the mill. The former bear the year 1802, and the water-mark upon the latter declares it to have been manufactured in 1811, therefore we shall trouble your Lordship no longer with the *Plaintiffs*, but bespeak your judgment when they appear before you as *Defendants*."

Mrs. Stokes was intantly taken into custody. Her son, alias Tom Smith, had, as we before observed, escaped; but a warrant was granted to seize his person, and also the body of Brierly, whom Mrs. Stokes accused as the sole instigator and author of the forgery. But he likewise left the court as soon as he saw the turn matters were likely to take, and was never heard of afterwards. Mrs. Stokes lay in gaol till the next Old Bailey Sessions; when the Earl of Milford refusing to appear against her, she was discharged; but only exchanged one place of

confinement for another. The trial of Robert Greenwood was still pending. It stood over till the event of Lord Milford's cause was decided; but the business at length coming on, the perjured witness was sentenced to stand in the pillory, and Mrs. Stokes's punishment remitted to the refunding five hundred pounds to Lady Milford: Brierly, as appeared by the male culprit's declaration, being the ostensible mover and cause of the perjury. In fact, she was the tool which he, workman-like, turned and guided to the accomplishment of those schemes which proved his final overthrow; and drove him from his native land, unpitied and unlamented, even by his nearest connexions.

Before we quit objects so ungrateful to the mind of feeling and sensibility, we must advert to two circumstances, nearly connected with the personages of whom we are now writing. That duty performed, we shall return to our heroine with renewed pleasure, from the necessity which has too long deprived us of her company.

The day after Mrs. Stokes's re-commitment, a stranger requested an interview upon business of moment; and, being admitted, presented to the astonished gaze of the prisoner, the man whose reported death had first kindled the fire of ambition in her mind, and whose unwelcome return would rob her of the annuity settled by Major Stokes on her as his wife. The sum, which once appeared in her eyes a *paltry pittance*, now there was a chance of losing it, increased in value with every second thought; until, at length, the *ample provision* was mentioned as a motive for silence; and a moiety of it for his sole and separate use promised, on condition, that no information whatever should reach Major Stokes of Serjeant Mellor's return to life and his native country. This he promised to reflect upon, and in answer to enquiries, resulting from curiosity rather than solicitude, gave her a long, but uninteresting narrative, which we shall comprise in a few words.

The enemy, finding some sparks of life remaining, carried him to their camp. A

long imprisonment followed; but an opportunity of escape presenting itself, he availed himself of it, and worked his passage in the last fleet for England. Passing through Westminster-hall, chance and curiosity led him into the Court of King's-Bench, which he was upon the point of quitting, when Mrs. Stokes addressing the court, he recognised his wife. This gave an interest to the cause it before wanted, and detained him until its final issue, and the place of her confinement were made known. "But give me," he continued, "a faithful account of your fortunes since we parted; and, perhaps, I may be of use in squeezing something further out of the man you call husband. What's his character and fortune; and where his residence? You must be fair and above board, if you expect either my concurrence in your past plans, or assistance in future."

Mrs. Stokes's narrative was of considerable length; with truth and falsehood so ingeniously blended, that Mellor thought her "more sinned against, than sinning;"

and promised to reflect upon what would turn to their mutual advantage.

* * * * *

Tom Smith, after ransacking his quondam mother's lodging, pondered on the probability of securing a maintenance, without again having recourse to servitude. Priscilla Gaskell, during their short acquaintance, had been as *coming* as any young man could wish. In their unreserved conversation, she made a vulgar boast "of the unlimited influence her mother possessed; that her will was the supreme law at Gaskell-house; and that her father durst no more contradict her, than he durst put his hand into the fire."

These, and many such unlady-like observations, would have disgusted a man of the least feeling or refinement; but Tom Smith neither objected to the sentiments or language. That wives should govern their husbands, he knew was no uncommon case, though he determined never to submit to petticoat sway in his own person; and of the indelicacy of making him a party in the

disputes of Mr. and Mrs. Gaskell he was no judge, since the decencies of well-bred people had never come under his own immediate observation, nor had reading helped to enlarge his mind. For though he had profited in his juvenile days from a Sunday school; and could read a play-bill, or write a letter with as little bad spelling as most of his fraternity, yet, as any thing beyond this was voted a *bore* amongst the enlightened inmates of the housekeeper's-room, Tom cheerfully joined in decrying what was beyond his abilities, and left the improvement of the mind to those poor creatures who know nothing of life. But though unlettered, he had common sense enough to know that Mrs. Gaskell's power—if he could see her before the late discovery became public—might influence his future fortunes, and that his marriage with the daughter of a person of property, must eventually produce competence, especially from a man of such feeling and consideration as his intended father-in-law was reported to be,

without allowing any thing to his wife's authority.

Full of this scheme—which was formed in a much shorter time than we have taken in reporting it—Tom was comfortably seated in the Exeter-coach, ere Hannah Stokes—alias Mellor—had taken full possession of her new apartment; and, in something less than a week, Lady Ann received the following letter from her old and highly-respected neighbour.

"My dear Madam,

"When the mind is burthened, it naturally seeks relief by communication; and, except to your friendly bosom, I know not where to fly for sympathy. Our worthy Curate sorrows over the remains of his lamented parent; but my lamentations are for the living, not the dead, and spring from a source the most grievous—the folly and degeneracy of a wife and daughter.—Priscilla, by her mother's connivance, has connected herself with a man of low birth, without education, and of very suspicious principles; even to the being whom Mrs.

Stokes endeavoured to impose upon the public as the offspring of your deceased brother.

"He introduced himself on the strength of supposed affinity, at a time when I was unfortunately absent; though I know not that my presence would have made any material difference; and imposed upon the credulity of my family by an artful tale of the Earl of Milford having acknowledged his brother's child, with a proviso, that he should be given up to his sole care. That his Lordship's authority was to commence by sending him abroad in an official capacity; but the love he bore his cousin Priscilla, was paramount to every other consideration, and rather than lose her, he would forego every idea of his uncle's protection. "Unfortunately," he added, "Mr. Gaskell has taken an unaccountable dislike to me, which will prevent, or at least postpone, our nuptials, since it would require time to correct his ill-founded antipathy; and, in the mean while, I shall be hurried into a foreign land, and, perhaps, forced to submit to a

mercenary marriage, or forfeit the Earl's favour for ever."

"This improbable fiction had its intended effect. Ambition, and, I doubt not, a spirit of rebellion against me, brought matters to a speedy conclusion; a license was procured —the indissoluble knot tied—and the day he left Tremorne, an account of the trial appeared at full length in the papers. Hannah Stokes' and Tom Smith's origin were exposed—the imposition intended to defraud the Earl of Milford clearly pointed out—and the person of Priscilla's husband accurately described, with a reward for his apprehension. This, I have no doubt, hurried him from Tremorne.

"When the above particulars met my astonished ear, I hoped to have proved the invalidity of their marriage, by its being solemnized under a false name. But that hope left me when, examining the register, I found Thomas Smith inserted, and that my daughter was the lawful wife of an unprincipled vagabond. Since the newspaper information, the females of my family have been

sullen and taciturn. No confidence is reposed — no consolation required — I am treated as though guilt attached to me, and they were the innocent victims of my imprudence.

"What to decide upon I know not. The fire-side, which to a man of my habits would have been paradise with a suitable companion, is, by my ill-assorted nuptials, a curse! But I have brought it upon myself. The sins of my youth are punished with retributive justice; and a consciousness of deserving it, has made me submit to indignities and insults, I once thought my nature incapable of bearing. But every feeling has its boundary; mine have reached the limits of forbearance, and one other step sets me beyond their influence; but that step shall be decisive.

"Mrs. Gaskell and her daughters would be much happier, I am well assured, would death free them from a husband and a father; and why should I exist a living monument of their hatred and my own abhorrence? I have sacrificed enough to the

world's opinion; but could I have rendered those respectable, for whom the offering was made, I would still have dragged the chain which fetters me. That being impossible, I am resolved to cast it off, and live henceforward separate from those, whose service is worse than an Egyptian bondage, and whose conversation grates upon the ear, and harrows up the feelings beyond any idea your Ladyship can have formed; because happily you have been exempt from the tiresomeness of folly, and the provocations of turbulence. May you ever be a stranger to what would disturb the happy serenity of your mind; and live a blessing to all around you, and blessed to the utmost extent of your own wishes.

"I have the honour to remain, Madam, with the most perfect esteem,

"Your Ladyship's faithfully
"devoted Servant,
"J—— GASKELL.

"*Gaskell-House,*
"*May* 14*th*, 1812."

Serjeant Mellor, after giving one night to

reflection, posted down into Devonshire, and introduced himself to the Major as a relation of Mrs. Stokes. The old gentleman fired at the name, and informed Mellor he never again wished to see Mrs. Stokes or any of her kindred.

"Then your honour is not very happy in the connection? Her first husband, Serjeant Mellor, found her a bitter pill, and Hannah has not forgotten her former pranks, I dare say."

"Her first husband, Sir, was *Captain Mellor*, in the East India service; and as to her former *pranks*, as you facetiously call them, they are ripened into crimes—crimes of the most atrocious nature! Would I had never known her!"

"What would you give the man who should release you from her?"

"I have released myself, at the expense of two hundred a year, which she forfeits, if she comes within twenty miles of my residence."

"But what would you give the person

who should release you *lawfully*, and for *ever*, both from her and the annuity?"

"Do you mean seriously?"

"I do, Sir, and will act in the same manner."

"Then you will be entitled to my everlasting gratitude, and a thousand pounds of lawful money."

"Make it fifteen hundred, and I am your man."

"A bargain. Now what do you propose?"

"Draw up a few lines, and when we have both signed it, I will open my plans."

This was instantly completed; but when the Major saw Mellor's name and profession under-written, he exclaimed, "Who are you?"

"The lawful husband, your Honour, of Hannah Mellor, now Stokes, and, by your bounty, master of fifteen hundred pounds; part of which I'll expend in a commission, and the rest in lottery tickets."

"Serjeant Mellor, you are the most agreeable visitor I have received for some time;

and my butler shall make you welcome to all the hospitalities of Pine Lodge. By your means I am once more a single man; and have now nothing to contend against but gout, bile, dropsy, jaundice, and a variety of the worm tribe,—trifles light as air, compared to the mischiefs caused by a bad woman, or the misery of being linked to a virago. But I beg pardon for speaking with such freedom of your wife. Usage has rendered that familiar, which would now be impertinent; but with gratitude for my release, I promise never to be guilty of a similar offence."

Mellor hastened back to London with as much speed, and more vivacity, than he left it; and again visiting his wife's prison, learnt her transaction with the Jew, and likewise that fifty pounds was all that remained of the money thus procured—that she was in debt at her lodging, and to various shop-keepers——"Oh, let them whistle for their money," interrupted Mellor. "As *my wife*, you have nothing to fear from creditors of that description; and I shall keep

out of their own way for my own sake. All we have to arrange is this c—sed business with Lady Milford,—That settled, and once more at liberty, you must make the best shift you can with the Major's paltry annuity—no part of which I shall rob you of—having, I think, interest enough to procure an ensigncy in some regiment abroad. Our first concern must be to get you out of this infernal place, for which purpose I am going to Lord Milford's solicitor, and may, perhaps, be able to compromise matters; at any rate, here you cannot remain. A prison is, generally speaking, inhabited by the *poor*, but it requires a *rich* man's revenue to live in it. Expect me again to-morrow; mean time support your spirits by the expectation of freedom."

Previous to Mellor's interview with his wife, he had seen the Earl's attorney, and found him by no means averse to accommodation. But, previous to the final adjustment, the Serjeant thought it necessary to sound the depth of the prisoner's purse, and likewise the extent of her debts; to which he [illegible] himself liable as soon as the late

transaction became public. For this he was, however, provided, having purchased a commission and secured his passage in an East Indiaman, prior to his visiting the prison a second time

That he should interest himself about his wife's liberation, particularly at the expence of two hundred and fifty pounds—the sum Mr. Archer agreed to accept—arose from no motives of love, but some small remains of feeling—some little compunction for robbing her of the annuity.—To have left her in prison, would have been an added aggravation—a climax of cruelty, that even Mellor would have shuddered at; though how she was to live when restored to society never produced an anxious thought. He knew her enterprising—he felt also that her natural abilities greatly exceeded his own—and with such advantages, what could impede her progress in the attainment of that competence she had before so skilfully attained? Though youth was fled, her person had lost none of its attraction; and as that had successfully aided her on a former occasion,

when less learned in matrimonial manœuvres, what might she not achieve, with necessity to whet her invention, and experience for her guide?

To these powerful auxiliaries he left his unsuspecting wife, after conducting her to a small apartment, better suited to her real than supposed prospects—left her, as fate ordained, for ever!—For during the passage to Bombay, in a fit of delirium, he threw himself out of the cabin-window, and was never seen afterwards.

CHAP VI.

AN ASSASSINATION.—THE LOST WIFE FOUND.—AND A DUEL.

Fanny with perfect candour detailed to Lady Ann and her Guardian the unpleasant adventure at St. James's, without attempting to conceal her feelings at the moment, or her apprehensions of future consequences. The person to whom most blame attached, she conceived to be Captain Corbett; because, though his Lordship's conduct was hasty and precipitate—perhaps a little rude—it by no means merited the opprobrious epithet bestowed by the former; and fully justified her Cousin's subsequent conduct. "But the result," she continued, "I tremble to reflect upon."

"The laws of modern honour," observed Mr. Strictland, "are arbitrary, and compel

man to take away the life of a fellow creature, or perhaps loose his own, on the most frivolous pretences. It is a law neither subject to the powers of reason, nor under the controul of judgment—neither recognizable on principles of justice or religion. It originated in revenge, was continued by pride and vain glory, and owes its present popularity to cowardice, or a lack of courage to encounter the blame of fools.

To send, or accept a challenge, is no evidence of the truth of any cause. The vanquished is as frequently the injured party as the vanquisher; and in a matter that rests so entirely upon accident—or at least ought to do so, for the man who depends upon known superior skill is little better than an assassin—where chance I say, is the arbiter, the dispute might with as much justice, and more regard to the laws of society, be settled by drawing lots or a cast of the die. But my dear young friend, I trust your fears of future consequences are groundless. If Captain Corbett descended to abuse, Lord Moseley's chastisement fully replied to it;

and I should hope settled the account, "errors excepted," as we say in the city."

At this moment Mrs. Bloomfield rushed into the room, and with much agitation in her looks—though whether pain or pleasure was the predominant feeling would be hard to decide—cried out "he's shot in the House of Commons!"

"Shot!" exclaimed the trio, at the same moment; "Who?"

"Percival," replied the widow. "Killed by an assassin!

"Had I guided his hand, the pistol should have been pointed elsewhere; but that between ourselves. What effect his death will have on the body politic I know not, but we have at all events one comfort to cling to."

"What is that?" enquired Mr. Strictland.

"That we cannot change for the *worse*. Percival, if report may be credited, was an amiable private character, and might have been a useful public one, had he remained in his former station. But ambition threw out lures he was too weak to resist, and that weakness followed him through the whole of

his ministerial career. A man may be a good husband—a worthy father—a benevolent master—a sincere friend—and a very bad statesman. Domestic virtues are highly laudable in themselves; but in the pilot who steers our national bark, we look for qualifications of a different complexion. To the virtues of Percival, should be added an exclusive regard for the welfare of his country, to which all other views ought to be subordinate. But how has this regard been shewn by the deceased? It has evinced itself by a decreased population—an impoverished revenue—a starving people—and the misery of thousands of individuals, who deplore the loss of husbands—fathers—brothers—and friends in this unjust, unnecessary, and destructive war. The most vicious character in existence could not have been a greater enemy to his King, his country, and his fellow citizens, than this reputed good man; from which we may fairly infer, that a clever, long-headed, sharp-witted, quick-sighted knave, would guide the helm with more credit to himself, and more prosperity to

the people, than Percival has done with all his saint-like attributes."

"But as no man is fully known, until he has been proved," said Lady Ann, "would it not be safer to trust the honest man, than the knave?"

"I would trust none of them," replied the widow with great emphasis. "If temptation fall in his way, the honest man, we have fatal proof, can resist as little as the knave. Pitt, for instance, you'll say, was an honest man.

"He was so far honest that he would neither rob a church, nor cheat his tradesmen; but he took the money out of the pockets of the industrious to carry on unnecessary wars, and to subsidize powers, who laughed at our credulity, and turned their backs upon us the moment their ends were answered. Pitt died poor, say his advocates. But his friends and relations are wallowing in sinecures and reversions. To pay which taxes are multiplied beyond all former precedent, every article of consumption feels it, either directly or indirectly—property is taxed to

that extent that people possessing small independencies, are reduced to shifts and meannesses to live at all—the once-flourishing merchant or manufacturer is become bankrupt—the shopkeeper looks in vain for his former customers; those who used to expend liberally, are, by the complexion of the times, obliged to limit their out-goings; and the poor are rising *en masse* for want of the commonest necessaries of life. These crying evils are produced by a war, in which we have no real interest, and burthens under which we groan, to pamper those who were before gorged; or to raise people from obscurity, who have neither private virtue nor public desert. But being allied to men in power, are placed upon the pension list, as an easy way of providing for poor relations; without considering that every such pension adds to the load of those already sinking under the pressure of poverty. Do away all sine cures, and places filled by proxy—pension none but those who have substantial claims upon their country—and there would be no real cause for murmurings; but to know that

the earnings of the poor are lavished upon the idle and the indolent—upon the drones in the hive of industry—who can wonder that complainings are heard in our streets, and that curses, not loud, but deep! follow the footsteps of our rulers?"

The widow was so earnest on her favourrite topic, and withal gave it so much force of voice, that Lady Milford entered unnoticed; and as her Ladyship archly placed her finger on her lips in token of silence, she heard nearly the whole of the foregoing speech. When Mrs. Bloomfield ceased, rather for want of breath than because her ideas were exhausted, the Countess, good-humouredly tapping her on the shoulder, enquired who could be so hardy as to anathematize the virtuous, enlightened, self-denying senators who served their country upon pure principles of patriotism, without glancing at the emoluments of office: and who, if called upon, would doubtless resign their superfluities to lessen the burthens of their fellow Citizens? "But, my dear madam," she continued "if you have any pity for my

feelings, change the subject, I am so surfeited with politics, and so sick of politicians, that I not unfrequently leave home to avoid their tiresome tormenting society. My Lord and his party are at this moment in actual deliberation on the probable, and the possible; and in a high fever with apprehension of some impending evil; whether it arises from a fear of loosing their *lives*, or their *places*, I cannot say. But I am, without reflection, continuing the subject I wished to dismiss. Frances, my love, indulge me with your company for an hour or two. I am going to make a few purchases for country cousins, and would rather depend upon your taste than my own."

Fanny was preparing to obey, when Frederick rushed into the room; and, trembling with agitation, exclaimed, "Oh madam! Oh Mr. Strictland! I have found her! Pale and sinking at your door—the victim of want—I discovered my virtuous—my suffering Mary! From the impulse of the moment I draggedher into the housekeeper's room; and the good, the humane Mrs. Smith is kindly

administering to her wants, whilst I endeavour to apologize for the temerity of my conduct. But had your Ladyship, or my benefactor seen her as I did—had you felt for her what I feel—you would I think have acted with as little regard to decorum as I have done."

"I hope all your momentary impulses, Frederick," replied Mr. Strictland, "will be in future as venial as the one you now think proper to vindicate. Had you acted otherwise than you have done, even by a stranger under the like pitiable circumstances, you would have incurred my displeasure. Return, therefore, to the poor afflicted, desire Smith to supply her with every comfort; and after a night's rest I have something to disclose that will conduce to your mutual happiness."

Frederick bowed, and was withdrawing, when his eye first caught Lady Milford and the widow. Gratitude for Mr. Strictland's goodness had already flushed his cheek, but shame, for having intruded so unceremoniously on Lady Ann's visitors, dyed his com-

plexion of the deepest crimson. He bent his body with graceful humility, and in faultering accents was beginning an apology, when Lady Milford interrupted him: "Mr. Leigh no defence of your conduct is necessary. The intrusion, as you are pleased to term it, was the natural effect of a good cause; and has placed you in a point of view—in a situation where I trust happiness will finally reach you, and what more could your father wish, were he alive to curb the destiny of his repentant offspring? Pardon me, young man, I meant not to dye your cheek with shame. The word repentant, is rather on your part cause of exultation; and who—even the best of us—under similar circumstances, could say, I would have acted otherwise? Youthful depravity *should*, and ever will be held in abhorrence, in the same proportion as the slightest symptoms of reformation *ought* to be applauded and encouraged. But alas! how few are blessed with the godlike attribute of mercy! How few like Lady Ann and Mr. Strictland, would have led a fallen creature from the paths of temptation,

and delivered him from the evils of vice! They will I doubt not have cause to rejoice i their good works, and thousands might, by similar conduct, draw erring mortals from the paths of perdition."

Mrs. Bloomfield, who was in all the family secrets, applauded Lady Milford's sentiments, and wished they were more generally acted upon. "But," continued she, "people who have most power, are so involved in vices of their own—vices not less heinous, though of a different complexion—or if not actually vicious, are so entangled in the labyrinths of fashionable frivolity; that they have no time for rational or charitable pursuits; and I am afraid still less inclination.

"Oh! I am sick of the shameless folly and ridiculous affectation displayed by modern masters and misses at fashionable routs! Masters and misses did I say? Why do I confine myself to children? Grandfathers and grandmothers, setting age and wrinkles at defiance, are running the same mad career, and instead of shewing their descendants examples of sobriety and prudence, are tak-

ing the lead in a race which promises nothing to the winner but ruin and misery.

"The smile on your countenance, Strickland, seems to say; 'why associate with beings so repulsive?' The hope—a vain one perhaps—of satirizing them into the appearance at least of creatures endowed with reason—of shaming them into rationality, and thereby forcing them to adopt sentiments and manners more congenial with *decorum*, though they set *morality* and *religion* at defiance. Mr. Leigh, the anxiety seated on your brow plainly informs me that you would rather, at this moment, be soothing your Mary, than listening to a sermon delivered in all the imposing grandeur of *silk* and *lawn*: how then can I expect to claim your attention to my perhaps ill-timed exhortation? But I will try your patience no longer. Go, in God's name, and comfort the poor afflicted whom adversity—perhaps villainy—has reduced to the confines of the grave; but who falling into the hands of the good Samaritan, will find a healing balm for her bruises, and a consoling cordial for her mental pains."

Frederick gladly obeyed the considerate widow's command; when Fanny prepared to attend the Countess; and Lady Ann and Mr. Strictland were left to a consultation, in which the recent event, which introduced a stranger into the family, was discussed with generosity and feeling.

The fracas at St. James's found its way into every fashionable print; but truth and falsehood were so ingeniously blended—according to the taste or talents of the different editors, that the parties concerned, scarcely recognised their own adventure.

In one circumstance, however, they were unanimous; namely, that a duel could not by any means be avoided. Whether such a termination had previously been decided upon by either of the gentlemen, we cannot precisely determine; but Corbett found, from the conversation of his brother officers, that his courage would be admitted upon no other premises; and that risking his life, was the only method to establish his reputation.

This important point settled, Major Grantham was the bearer of a note appoint-

ing time and place; to which Moseley, "nothing loth," acquiesced; and at the hour mentioned, attended by Sir Herbert Huntley, met the adverse party.

The seconds, according to general usage, endeavoured at accommodation; but Moseley was doubly armed; and though his personal injuries, which were in fact self created, and the result of his own impetuosity, might have submitted to apology: those of a beloved sister would admit of no alleviation. 'Tis true, he had promised Maria never to *seek* Corbett; but being himself *sought*, the summons, which presented a chance of revenging wrongs, not to be thought of without the keenest resentment, was obeyed with alacrity. Yet, scorning to take advantage, even of the man he hated, Moseley generously waived his right to the first fire; and both pistols going off at the same instant without effect, an adjustment was again proposed. To this Corbett gave a willing assent, and held out his hand in token of amity; but Moseley, not only repulsed his offer in the most haughty manner, but accompa-

nied his rejection with the remark, that he would never shake hands with a villain! The seconds now again interposed—for Sir Herbert thought his friend was going unjustifiable lengths, but his Lordship put an end to their amicable endeavours by repeating,—"a cowardly villain! The man, or rather the monster, who sports with the peace and happiness of a virtuous and amiable woman, deserves no better epithet. Captain Corbett has proved himself that man, and must answer to the charge, with the renewed risk of his worthless life."

A second fire, that proved decisive, followed this intemperate speech; for Moseley's right arm refused any longer to second his resentment. His adversary's ball lodged just above the elbow; but was extracted on the spot by a medical friend, whom Major Grantham had the precaution to bring with him; and as no apparently alarming consequences were likely to ensue, the gentlemen returned to town in the same order they left it, after the seconds had made another fruitless attempt to reconcile the combatants.

"I cannot be in friendship," exclaimed his Lordship, "with a man whose actions I despise! Whenever, or wherever we meet in future, it must be as strangers. One request I have to make, not on my own account, but to preserve the feelings of a female from being wounded by public animadversion."

"Name your request, my Lord," replied the Major, "and if compatible with the laws of honour, I pledge myself that it shall be granted."

"I rely upon your word, Major, that this meeting shall be kept a profound secret. Yet do not imagine that my defeat prompts the request; I care not if the world witnessed it; but feminine delicacy is a tender plant, and must not—mark me,"—looking at Corbett, "*shall* not be blighted by the breath of vanity."

"Your words, my Lord, are very impeperative," observed Corbett. "Such language might become a conqueror——"

"It becomes a *man*, Sir. A man sensibly alive to the honour of his house, and deter-

mined to defend, not the person only, but the peace and feelings of those allied to him. Accident has given you one advantage; but beware of a second contest."

"The caution, doubtless, comes in friendly guise, my Lord, and in the same spirit," tauntingly replied the Captain, "I return it. What is now merely a wound, may, in the event of another rencontre, prove a death-blow; from which my firm nerve, if called upon will never shrink; nor in my future inclinations or pursuits, will I be intimidated by the hectoring of a boy! The secret of this meeting shall not by me transpire, because my friend has given his word. *That* binds us both; without reference to the extreme delicacy and refinement of your Lordship's feelings, such effeminate and puerile arguments, are with me rather matter of ridicule than consideration."

This retort finished the hostile conference, and Moseley accompanied Sir Herbert Huntley to his lodgings, where a plausible story was fabricated, and his family led to believe that an accidental overturn of the carriage caused his Lordship's present disability.

CHAP. VII

A NARRATIVE,

Which the Author hopes will be found interesting.

FREDERICK LEIGH, at the time he was abandoned by his unnatural mother, was in his sixth year; and had that interesting appearance—that air of gentility—which seldom distinguishes children who derive their birth from the lower orders of society; in fact, he looked the offspring of a gentleman. I know some of my readers will cavil at this, and say, "the distinction is not one of nature, but education." Here I beg leave to differ. Specimens of children like Frederick, are as seldom found in the lowest, as appearances of personal vulgarity and meanness are to be traced in the highest circles; nay, they are so uncommon, that an instance never passes without observation. It is

true we have some mean-looking lords, and vulgar-looking ladies; but they are exceptions to a general rule; though, perhaps, rather more common than a gentleman-looking husbandman, or his lady-looking wife. But leaving this point to be discussed by more able philosophers than myself, I proceed to state, that the lovely child of Hannah Leigh—now Mellor—was discovered bewailing his deserted state in the public streets of Falmouth, into which he had been driven by the inhuman landlord of a small inn, upon finding the boy thrown upon his mercy; for Serjeant Mellor fulfilled neither of his promises to the mother.

The venerable, heaven-born being, who wiped the childish tear of affliction from his eye, was a man, who, on losing a beloved wife, had retired from business upon a moderate fortune, and settled within a short mile of the town, with his only child, a girl not five years of age. Mr. Litchfield had married late in life, and the offspring of his lost Mary was the idol of as affectionate a heart as ever throbbed in the bosom of

humanity. Frederick, whose young affections bounded towards the being who had thus unexpectedly hushed his sorrows, related during their walk to Primrose-cottage, his journey from Beverley in a large carriage, drawn by eight horses—with affectionate interest talked of the kindness of his mother, ere she became acquainted with the gruff-looking soldier—and concluded by describing the vessel which, he had been told, they were to sail in to a place a great way off.

The welcome Mr. Litchfield received from his beloved Mary, was in proportion to the pleasure she anticipated by the introduction of a companion and play-fellow of nearly her own age, and in manners and appearance the most prepossessing. For, to do Hannah Leigh justice, she never, in the smallest instance, forgot to whom her child owed his existence; but endeavoured, with the natural good sense she possessed, to instill notions of gentility into her son, which should not disgrace the fortune he might one day inherit from the bounty of his

father. And, though too illiterate to instruct him herself, he had profited largely, even at this tender age, from the tuition of the Curate of Beverley, who, to eke out a miserable stipend, undertook the arduous, but ill-requited, task of instilling knowledge into the minds of youth.

We shall not spin out this narrative by dwelling on the scenes of Frederick's infancy; but merely state, that after ascertaining the departure of Serjeant Mellor and his wife, Mr. Litchfield adopted the little stranger, and had him instructed in every branch of education necessary to form a useful and virtuous member of society. Meanwhile the infant attachment of Frederick and Mary grew with their growth, and strengthened with their years. In a word, the harmony of this little family never knew an hour's abatement, until immortality claimed the saint-like being, who, during life, had been the universal friend of mankind, and shewed at his decease how a Christian could die.

By his will he left the whole of his little

property, amounting to five thousand pounds, to his daughter, on condition that she became the wife of Frederick within twelve months after his death; but in case either of the parties refused to obey his dying request, the money, now placed at interest in the hands of an old friend at Bristol, was to be equally divided, and the furniture, plate, and linen, to devolve exclusively on his beloved and dutiful Mary. The heart-rending grief of the young couple was in proportion to their irremediable loss; but time, the softener of every calamity, came with healing on his wings, and the expiration of ten months saw Mary the happy wife of Frederick.

Several weeks rolled on in felicity too great to last; when Frederick, who had served an apprenticeship to a wine-merchant in Falmouth, expressed a wish to embark in the same business, for which it was necessary to call in part of his capital. But judge, reader, of their affliction, when the next post brought an account of the death of old Mr. Ryan; and that his only son, a depraved,

dissipated young man, had turned every thing into money, and sailed three weeks before for the United States of America.

Thus deprived of every prospect which a lucrative and respectable business might have realized, servitude pointed out the only remedy; and as education rendered him fully competent to undertake counting-house business, and youth is ever sanguine, Frederick and Mary, without a murmur, agreed to dispose of their household effects, and try what could be done by a journey to the Metropolis; several efforts having been made to procure a situation at Falmouth without success.—Shakspeare says,

when sorrows come
They come not singly, but in battalions."

And so it was with our ill-fated couple. A day was appointed for the disposal of the late Mr. Litchfield's valuable furniture, when, dreadful to relate! the evening previous to the sale, the premises, and every thing inanimate they contained, were reduced to a heap of ashes; and Frederick and Mary, with

their old female servant, narrowly escaped sharing the same melancholy fate. That they were not consumed was matter of boundless gratitude; but every article they possessed perished in the conflagration; and they were indebted to the kindness of their neighbours for a necessary change of linen.

Poor old Martha, who all her life had been in servitude, was now the only one of the three not pennyless; and likewise the only one who could boast of relations able and willing to afford her shelter. For Mr. Litchfield owed his origin to poor but industrious parents in Devonshire, and with the only surviving and distant branches of the family he had held no communication for the last forty years. Mrs. Litchfield was an orphan, who crossed the Atlantic at an early period, and was wholly unconnected in this country; so that we find Frederick and Mary isolated beings—links cut off from the chain of kindred—poor—unconnected—portionless and friendless, if we except the temporary compassion which their local situation awakened.—But, in opposition to these

disadvantages, they were happy in each other; possessed youth and health, with the benefit of well-disposed, well-informed minds; and to those who lack all, or any of these blessings, their situation will appear divested of those horrors, which such complicated calamity would, in other circumstances have produced.

The tradesman with whom Frederick had served his time, and by whom he was greatly beloved, set on foot a private contribution, by which the young couple procured necessary clothing, and defrayed the expences of their journey to town; where Frederick had no doubt of meeting with speedy and profitable employment. Weeks, however, elapsed without the accomplishment of this desirable event—for hundreds of regular clerks were at this period of stagnation unemployed—during which time of anxiety and disappointment, a merely decent lodging was exchanged for a miserable garret, and for that they were in arrears; whilst every second article of clothing was sacrificed piecemeal to procure the coarsest food,

and for the last two days, a limited quantity of bread had been moistened with pure element.

To add mental to corporeal suffering, the owner of the garret, a rude vulgar brute, made daily unfeeling applications for the rent; and at length threatened to send Frederick to jail, and turn Mary into the street.

This alarming stretch of power decided Frederick's fate. A miniature picture of the late Mr. Litchfield, which Mary constantly wore round her neck, was, by the distracted husband, pledged for a guinea; with this sum he bought a pair of second-hand pistols, and hiring a horse, to go he knew not whither, or scarcely with what intent, for several horsemen and carriages passed unmolested, when Lady Milford's chariot, followed only by one outrider, at length presented a probable object, from whom much booty might be obtained with little risk.

The event answered, as before related, as likewise the attack upon his unknown mo-

ther, and Frederick's subsequent confinement at Bath.

Meanwhile the hard-hearted landlady had in part made good her threat. The husband was beyond her reach, but on Mary she wreaked her vengeance, and with the malice of a fiend—at a late hour of night—in the depth of winter—without the comfort of a cloak, or covering for her head—thrust from her inhospitable door the wretched, fainting victim of want and misery!

Poor Mary's feelings when she found herself for the first time alone, and at an hour so pregnant with danger, may, perhaps, be imagined, but my feeble pen would fail in describing them. Conceive a female nurtured in the lap of prosperity—brought up with delicacy and tenderness by a parent, who "never suffered the winds of heaven to visit her face too roughly."—Next fancy this idolized child married to the lord of her affections, and equally beloved by him, and to whom money, until the last few weeks, had been of no comparative value.—Contrast, I say, her former prospects and actual

situation; with the poor, forlorn, helpless, famished Mary, walking the streets of the metropolis, with no shield against the cutting wind and biting frost;—uncertain of the fate of her husband—for his absence was unaccounted for, and the probability occurred that she had seen him for the last time,—and no pen—no imagination, I think, can do justice to her feelings.

For several minutes, Frederick's almost despairing wife sat on the step of the closed door; but clad in a manner that, at this season, defied genial warmth, although there had been a roof to protect her, the inclement air pierced through her scanty covering, and she found there was no chance for life but what arose from bodily exercise. Yet to leave the place where alone her Frederick could find her, was, if possible, to be avoided; he might return immediately;—"or,—" she faintly articulated, "he may—Oh, God! never return again!"

Two women passing heard this heart-rending ejaculation; and one of them, without stopping, replied, "Suppose he never

does, there's plenty more to be had." "Yes," continued the other, ending her speech with a loud laugh; but I suppose Miss's motto is constancy."

This unwomanly attack, the first insult she had ever been subject to, terrified her no less from its grossness than its novelty. From the other sex, she knew there was something to dread; but from any outrage in the form of woman, her mind had not been prepared, and was, consequently, incapable of guarding against. But thus convinced of her deplorable state, and by this time shivering with cold, she determined to pace the pavement to and fro, without losing sight of the door so lately closed against her.

Her first attempt was tottering and feeble, for the frost had nearly paralized her limbs, when a footman, belaced and betasselled, overtook the distressed wanderer, and, with an oath, bade her go home and sleep herself sober.

A second pang, though unequal in magnitude to that inflicted by her own sex,

shot athwart the chilled bosom of poor Mary, and for a moment deprived her of recollection; but Frederick, the only object of her solicitude, instantly chased away every other idea, and with him occurred the alarming certainty that she had strayed further from the house than prudence warranted.

Hastily turning round, she retraced her steps, and, to her unspeakable joy, saw a gentleman knock at the door, as she thought, of her late lodging. Hurrying forward, she seized his arm, and in almost inarticulate accents exclaimed, "Enter not that house, but come with me; some place will give us shelter, and if not, whilst you are with me I can lie in the street."

This speech, addressed to a stranger—for, alas! it was not Frederick—required no interpretation. The calling of the speaker was apparently obvious, and required not the corroboration her words conveyed. But though she really had been of that unhappy, miserable class of females who walk the streets almost in a state of nudity, whilst the tempest

roars, and the frost bites keenly, the man who can add insult to wretchedness, deserves not the name, but ranks in the scale of existence with the brutes that perish.

Such was the person our unfortunate wanderer addressed. He was a member of the Society for the Suppression of Vice; and with those gentlemen feeling is lost in what they falsely conceive to be duty. With savage brutality he shook her from him; and, in accents loud and authoritative, threatened the watch-house for this offence, and in case of repetition, painted the miseries of beating hemp in Bridewell; "an employment," he continued, "well befitting such *pests* as you."

As he uttered the last words, Mary dropped senseless on the pavement, where this humane and religious member of a society, whose partial edicts leave the rich unmolested, but punish the poor with unjust and cruel severity, left her to recover, or die, as Providence should decree; and, in all probability, the lamp of life would have been extinguished for ever—for the cold had chilled her blood, and circulation proceeded

slowly—when she was roused from transitory death by the exertions of a man dressed in the primitive and comely garb of a quaker. "Poor child!" he feelingly exclaimed, "what can I do for thee?"

"Oh! take me to some habitation," she answered, "where I may breath out my last sigh secure from insult and contumely. Want and cold have nearly seized their victim; but my soul revolts at leaving its earthly habitation exposed in the public streets."

"Hast thou no home?"

"None."

"Then come with me. Bear up until we arrive in the next street, and peace, and comfort, and repose await thee." A few minutes brought them to the door of a large house, where admission at so late an hour was with difficulty obtained, and would, probably, have been refused, had not the stranger announced himself as "Moses Bentley." This gentleman was a leading man amongst the society of friends, and a beneficent subscriber to the charity in which

he now sought refuge for a poor object, every way entitled, he hoped, to the relief provided for female penitents.

Mary being placed before the fire of a clean, comfortable kitchen, and such aliment administered as the matron of the institution thought most condusive to her recovery; the worthy man took leave, with a promise to return in the morning, and settle every thing for the young creature's final admission. But though relieved from the horrors of want, and the danger of perishing by cold, sleep refused to visit poor Mary. Her thoughts were too much disturbed by the unknown fate of Frederick to drop even for a moment into the peaceful calm of oblivion, and, at an early hour in the morning, she left her bed, determined to loiter about her late habitation, as that presented the only probable chance of a re-union with her husband.

During breakfast, which she took in company with the matron, that good woman painted the advantages and comforts of the asylum over which she presided, and enu-

merated to her astonished hearer, the number of miserable victims, who, from the grossest depravity, had been reclaimed, and were now examples of virtue and sobriety. "I repeat this, young woman," she contitinued, "to encourage you in the ways of chastity. I think, from the modesty of your appearance and deportment, that a life of infamy is not, nor ever was, your choice. Perhaps some libertine seduced you under a promise of marriage—no uncommon case—we have many such instances in this house; and now leaves you to bewail, too late, your own credulity and his falsehood. Trust me with your story, and depend upon my advice and assistance in recovering the path of innocence, from which you have unhappily strayed."

When Mary recovered from the surprise this discourse occasioned, she felt truly as if a load had been removed from her mind; and viewed her calamities, heavy though they were, as light in the balance, compared to what they might have been, had her situation indeed been what this respectable wo-

man supposed. A smile of conscious integrity beamed from her eye, and her soul in thankfulness ascended to that being, who, amidst every other calamity, had kept her feet from stumbling in the paths of vice. "I perceive, madam," addressing the matron, "the error into which my appearance has led you; but thank God! it is an error. Infamy and depravity are strangers to my mind as pollution to my person; and the only crime I can lay to the charge of myself, or my husband, is poverty; poverty arising from no imprudence of our own, but the villainy of others. Last night, in the absence of my protector, at a late hour of night, I was turned out of my lodging without even a bonnet to screen me from the inclemency of the weather, and should have perished a miserable victim to cold and hunger, had not the beneficent hand of charity raised me from the earth, and brought me, doubtless under the same error which deceived you, to this place. Thankful for the relief I have received, I once more go to seek my husband; and if possible prevail upon the hard-hearted

woman to restore my bonnet and shawl, whereby my appearance in the public streets may be less open to observation. You will have the goodness to make my case known to the worthy man who brought me hither, and likewise say, that I feel his humanity as much as if I had deserved it to its utmost extent.

She now rose to depart; but the matron insisted upon accommodating her with a bonnet of her own, and a warm woollen cloak such as the Penitents usually wear. This was gladly acceded to; and with a heart lightened of half its load, Mary found herself before the door of her old lodging. A timid knock was answered by the woman of the house, who, to her enquiry after Frederick, surlily replied "he has never returned, if he had I should have lodged him in prison; the only place for people who come into an honest house without money to pay their way." At the conclusion of this unfeeling speech, she shut the door with a force that threw Mary, whose weakness made her incapable of resistance, off the step; and on reco-

vering her feet, she found her arm considerably bruised, and very painful. A gentleman, who had witnessed the transaction, offered his assistance in raising her from the ground, and requested he might have the pleasure of seeing her safe home; but the latter, with tears in her eyes, refused, for no home, alas! was open to receive her. The stranger was not to be discouraged, for two very obvious reasons; he saw she was young, and he felt she was pretty. Her egress from the female penitentiary first introduced her to his notice; and not doubting that her former course of life had made that a desirable asylum, and that she was even now returned to the world after a salutary probation; he determined it should be no fault of his if she did not qualify for a second admission. With this view he kept pace with her uncertain steps, and at length asked in a voice of gentleness if she wanted a service? "If so," he added, "I think I have interest enough to procure you one."

The idea was new, and the first mention of servitude coloured her cheek with the

flush of resentment. Momentary, however, was her anger, for to what better prospect could she look forward? There was protection even in that, and what had she not suffered from the want of it? Her only lawful protector had now been unaccountably absent two days, and what might not have occurred threatening to her happiness in that period? 'Tis true, the gentleman was unknown, but she had already safely trusted one stranger, and the appearance of this was equally favourable; besides, if the present opportunity was lost, where could she again satisfy the cravings of hunger, where find a pallet on which to rest her weary limbs after another day of wandering? The matron had given her no encouragement to return; on the contrary, she had very candidly stated, that, to misapprehension alone she was indebted for casual relief; and that distress, however severe, if accompanied with virtue and goodness, could meet with no relief from a charity solely devoted to vice and infamy.

Mary and her companion leisurely pur-

sued their way during this mental soliloquy; but as no answer had been returned to his proposal, in the most conciliating accents he continued, "perhaps you have some other object in view; if so, I beg your pardon for interfering where I can have no possible right, except what arises from compassion. The lady to whom I proposed a recommendation, possesses feelings towards her own sex, of the most considerate and friendly kind; pleasure and happiness are found beneath her roof; and at this moment she is in want of a young person whose servitude will be rendered easy and comfortable."

The unsophisticated mind of Mary, unused to deception, and unsuspicious of the arts practised in London to beguile the unwary, listened without reluctance to the plan which promised support; and, as she meant each returning day to visit the house were Fredrick left her, and to leave her address, as soon as that could be ascertained; without further hesitation acceded to the stranger's proposal; at the same time positively refusing, what he strenuously urged,

a personal introduction. At length, finding his intreaties unavailing, he proposed to write a note in the Tavern they were then passing, and directing it to Mrs. Leesom, handed his unsuspecting victim into a coach, giving the driver private orders where to deliver his fare.

Mrs. Leesom did not rank amongst the very worst of her fraternity—for I will not pay my sagacious readers so poor a compliment as to suppose them unacquainted with the description of house to which poor Mary was consigned—on the contrary, she was decent in her manners, and obliging in her deportment; and won the heart of our novice ere she had been many hours under her roof.

Several youthful females formed part of her establishment, who Mary understood were boarders, and perfectly independent of controul; whilst the employment allotted to herself, merely to carry on appearances, was of the least laborious kind, and such as she had frequently employed herself in

whilst under the protecting roof of a parent.

The day succeeding her arrival she wrote a long, descriptive epistle to Frederick, which Mrs. Leesom undertook to send, on the plea that Mary could not at that time be spared; but the messenger, in her hearing, was ordered to be very particular in his enquiries respecting the gentleman to whom the letter was addressed. The pretended return of the Porter however brought no comfort to the heart of Mary, except an assurance that her letter was safely deposited, with a promise that Mr. Leigh should have it the moment he appeared.

At the end of a fortnight, during which time Mary was closely confined to the house, though under pretences to which a servant could make no objection, a gentleman requested to see her in Mrs. Leesom's parlour. Fully occupied with the image of Frederick, she obeyed the summons with alacrity; but disappointment and chagrin were never more evident, than when she beheld, instead of her husband, the person who recommended

her to her present abode, and whom Mrs. Leesom introduced by the name of Clayton. This gentleman beheld, with pleasing surprise, the improvement a few days had made in the appearance of the before lovely object of his desire. Coarse fare, and that scantily provided, had paled the roses on her cheeks, and deadened the lustre of her eyes, which now shone with a brilliance, unrivalled even in her days of happiness.

Clayton took an advantage of Mrs. Leesom's temporary absence to question Mary; from whom he learnt that she was as happy as circumstances would permit; and truly grateful to him for procuring her so comfortable an asylum.

"Gratitude, my dear girl," he replied, "is pleasing from your lips, but may I not hope to inspire a warmer sentiment?"

"A warmer sentiment!"

"Yes, Mary. If adoration on my part, cannot create love on your's, I shall curse the day which gave so fascinating an object to my view. But softness is the character of your countenance, and I will not despair:

say, Mary, that I have no cause; say only that you will strive to return my passion, and I will wait your own time be it ever so remote."

"No time can produce the sentiments you appear to wish. Your ignorance of my situation has called forth an avowal, I am sure you will be sorry for, when that situation is clearly understood. Know then, Sir, that I am a wife, and firmly, irrevocably attached to the man whose name I bear. Misfortunes have caused a temporary separation, but could I but think it otherwise than transient, I would with pleasure return to the wretchedness from which you rescued me; since by that means death would soon put a period to my sorrows."

Mary knew little of Clayton when she supposed her being a wife would prevent his farther solicitations. The intelligence was not even new to him; for in conjunction with Mrs. Leesom, he had read the letter intended for her husband, and by that means penetrated pretty deeply into the history of this unfortunate couple. Clayton was, beside

beingan avowed libertine in respect to females in general, a fearless follower of married women; and in his eye, though Mary had appeared at first sight pleasing, her attractions now he knew she was a wife, were irresistible; and to bring her to his own terms, the decided and conclusive determination of his soul. To effect this no place could have been better adapted; for though the head of the establishment was not a woman who could, or would sanction *force*, any thing short of that, she deemed neither *unfair* nor *dishonourable*.

Clayton concluded his interview without alarming the delicacy of Mary beyond what his first declaration naturally caused, or giving her the slightest reason to suspect the purity of the people with whom she was domesticated. And during several succeeding visits, between which he suffered a week, sometimes a fortnight to elapse, he confined himself to professions of friendship, and a few useful articles of dress; and as these came through the hands of Mrs. Leesom,

they were received as marks of that Lady's approbation, and appreciated accordingly.

One day, Mary being more than ever unhappy on her husband's account, determined that nothing should prevent her going in person to their old lodging, since no satisfaction could be obtained through the medium she had several times employed. But Mrs. Leesom, with more than her usual kindness, painted the dangers young women were subject to in perambulating the streets of London without a protector, in such glowing colours, that Mary sighed at the impropriety of carrying her plan into effect. "If, indeed," she continued "you would accept of Mr. Clayton for your escort, no danger could assail you; but that I know, and I commend you for it, your delicacy will refuse. In two or three days I shall have a call into that neighbourhood myself, the same coach shall convey us, and in my company you can have no objection to Clayton occupying a third seat."

Once more foiled in her wishes, she determined to wait patiently the appointed time,

but on no account to make a party with Clayton, whose admiration, though not expressed in words, was too visible to be overlooked. At the conclusion of this conference, Mary went about her usual business, the most labourious part of which was confined to Mrs. Leesom's bed-room and an adjoining dressing closet which had two approaches, one from the sleeping apartment, the other from the stairs.

As she was putting the room in order, she heard some persons enter the closet, and likewise open the door of communication; but seeing no one, for she was at that moment accidentally shaded by the curtain, the door was again closed, though not latched; and Mary, without knowing, or indeed careing who they might be, pursued her allotted employment, until a voice, which she knew to be Clayton's, in rather a loud key, pronounced her name.

This roused a very natural curiosity, and drawing nearer, she overheard a conversation which convinced her of the disreputable character of the house, and her own imme-

diate danger from the libertine Clayton. Her just idea was to face the guilty couple, and upbraid them with her meditated ruin; but this was the thought of a moment, and yielded to her natural timidity of character, which whispered, that stealing out of he house would be the quietest and least objectionable mode of proceeding; and as she had already gained sufficient information, and knew that the principal persons concerned in her detention were too much engaged to observe her movements, she crept with noiseless steps out of the apartment, and rushing down stairs gained the street door without molestation. But here a strong lock opposed her passage, which no strength she possessed could force, and the key had been cautiously removed. Alarmed at a proceeding so hostile and unexpected, for a moment all presence of mind forsook her; but distant voices proclaiming the approach of the enemy, brought the door leading to the area to her recollection. Hastily descending the stairs she rushed through the kitchen, where no one opposed her passage, and opening the

outward door, was gliding through it, when the cook, a stout, masculine woman, laid her brawney hand upon the shoulder of the trembling Mary, and in a stentorian voice exclaimed "whither so fast, my pretty one? I am sure you have nobodys leave for departing in this private manner, and without it your escape is as much as my place is worth; therefore return, my little runaway, and know when you are well off."

Thus forced to re-enter the detested house, Mary threw herself upon one of the kitchen chairs, when an agony of tears relieved her almost bursting heart. During this period of distress, one of Mrs. Leesom's young women came with a message to the cook, and with feeling enquired into the nature of Mary's affliction? This she thought it imprudent to divulge before her muscular enemy, whose gripe she had no wish to encounter a second time; but pointing to the stairs, Julia, by which name she was known in the house, took the hand of the still sobbing Mary, and in her own apartment learnt the full extent of her fearful apprehensions.

There Julia endeavoured to lessen her fears by an assurance of aiding her escape the first moment a favorable opportunity occurred, provided an appeal to Mrs. Leesom should prove unavailing, which she strongly advised her to put in immediate practice. This Mary did the moment she was assured of Clayton's departure; but, to her utter astonishment, the unprincipled woman made out a demand for board, lodging, and clothes, of which she threatened to enforce the payment, unless Mary quietly submitted to the rules and orders of her house, and in particular treated Mr. Clayton with that kindness his exclusive preference demanded.

Argument is vain, where reason and justice are set at defiance, and the interest of those we fancy ourselves beholden to, paramount to every consideration of benevolence and humanity. Clayton had for several years been a strenuous supporter of Mrs. Leesom's house, and, without reflecting that self gratification was the main spring of his actions, and not any individual attachment to her or her interest, she seemed to think no sacri-

fice of religion or morality too great, if by any means she could gratify his vanity, or administer to his passions.

Mary retired from the conference to her own apartment; where, exchanging her present dress for the rusty black in which she entered the house, and making all the pretended presents of Mrs. Leesom into a bundle, she waited the coming of Julia, who had promised to see her the first opportunity. But the evening passed away without the expected visit. Midnight arrived, and throwing herself on the bed, sleep for a short time buried her senses in forgetfulness. At length, a gentle voice, and the touch of a soft hand aroused her, and starting up, she beheld Julia. "Now, my poor girl," she softly uttered, "now is the time for your escape. I have stolen the key from the cook—who, in a state of inebriety, has fallen asleep in her chair—take advantage of it; day will soon appear, and into whatever hands you may hereafter fall, thank Providence that you leave this house as pure as you entered it."

Mary was instantly ready; and, wrapping

herself in the cloak bestowed by the benevolent matron of the female penitentiary, followed Julia into the kitchen ; where, fallen on the floor, lay the prostrate cook. The door yielded without a difficulty, and she was turning to thank her preserver, when Julia took a folded paper from her bosom, and in the softest accents said, "read this as soon as day-light renders it legible; and lose no time in thanking one, who, though lost herself, is happy to have preserved you from a similar fate. Farewell! Heaven preserve you in the paths of purity, and in your orisons forget not the wretched Julia."

Without giving Mary time to reply, she glided into the house, and the turn of the key gave the forlorn wanderer a presentiment that she had seen her deliverer for the last time.

Behold Mary once more at liberty ; but remembering what she had before suffered in the public street, it was several minutes before she had courage to ascend the area steps. At length with trembling limbs, and

palpitating heart, she reached the top, and looking up the street, and down the street, saw one vast void uninterrupted by a single being; a death-like silence reigned, and except the glimmer of expiring lamps, not a symbol betokened the affinity of existing matter. As she stood pondering on the propriety of turning to the right or the left; a human voice came on the stillness of the night, though the speaker was invisible. But suddenly, emerging from a street about a dozen yards to the right, and making towards the place where she still lingered, two men appeared; one bearing a lanthorn, and apparently supporting the faultering steps of the other. To remain where she was was to court insult, and to walk away, since it must be in the same direction they were taking, conveyed little prospect of safety; but the area, still promised temporary protection, and thither again she softly descended. Ere she reached the bottom, however, she heard the well-known voice of Clayton, so near that she almost lost her footing from the fright, exclaim, " this is the house, my

fine fellow; give mother Leesom a good tantararara, and then vanish." The watchman obeyed, and as he left the door called past six o'clock.

As Mary stood more dead than alive, waiting the result of this untimely summons, a voice from the kitchen called out "Cook! why cook, I say! There's a knock at the door loud enough to awaken the dead; stir ye—stir ye, woman." But the cook returned no answer that was intelligible, and Mary could plainly hear the ascending footsteps of the person who had vainly endeavoured to disturb her slumbers. Meanwhile the knocking was repeated with additional force, and this time with effect; but the door had no sooner closed upon her enemy, than with a swiftness she scarcely thought herself capable of, Mary ran up the steps, and no longer deliberating upon right or wrong, pursued her way with as much celerity as the darkness would permit.

Day just broke when our poor fugitive reached Westminster bridge, but it was yet too dark to read her note; and having

reached the extremity, she reflected that a further pursuit of the same tract was leading her *from* London, consequently, from all hopes of meeting her Frederick. She therefore turned back, and stopping upon the centre arch, again drew the note from her pocket. Examining the direction she found, written in a neat hand "To Mary;" and convinced by this that the inside was likewise legible, although yet scarcely light, she tore the seal, when a sudden gust of wind carried something that was inclosed over the battlements; but not immediately foreseeing the extent of her misfortune, she turned to the envelope, and the single line it contained convinced her that the inclosure thus rudely torn from her, was indeed Bank paper, and though to the smallest amount, twenty shillings was wealth to one who lacked both food and shelter.

Leaning over the fatal battlement, her eye unconsciously resting on the flood beneath, as if seeking a recoverable treasure, she was disturbed in her meditations by a bricklayer passing to his work. Stopping a moment to

gaze on *her*, who could almost have arraigned the decrees of providence, and thought herself deserted both by God and man, he bluntly asked "what brought her to the bridge at that hour?"

"What, indeed!" she replied, "It was a fatal hour to me. In any other place it might have been recoverable, but the stream has carried it far away, and I shall never see it more."

"Poor thing! But how came it in the stream? I am afraid you are no better than you should be, and this palaver is perhaps only meant to hide your guilt."

"Guilt! Oh no! I am unfortunate but not guilty! I am poor, but indeed I am innocent."

"How came your child in the river then?"

"Child! I have no child—I never had any."

"Did not you say the stream had washed it far away, and that you should never see it more?"

"I did. But the object I referred to was a paper—a bank note; which, having blown

over the battlement, has left me a pennyless, houseless wanderer."

The honest bricklayer brushed away a tear, and, drawing something from his pocket, replied, "if I were a rich man I would make it up to you, but if a shilling from a poor man will serve you, in God's name take it." Then pressing the hand into which he deposited the silver, and wiping his eyes with the corner of his neck handkerchief, he left poor Mary so much affected at his liberality, that words refused to obey the impulse of her feelings, and tears were all the return she could make.

Mary, who losing twenty shillings thought herself abandoned by Providence, now possessing *one*, confessed the goodness of the Deity, and called down blessings on the worthy mechanic; who, out of his little, had given much, and enabled her to look on the coming day without dread of perishing for want.

It was by this time broad day, and her first care was to find out their late lodging; but this was a work of more difficulty than she

imagined. The name of the street she knew, but whether it was situated in the East, or the West, or to what parish it belonged, she was totally ignorant; and after rambling about the greater part of the day, according to different directions, without finding the desired place; harassed in mind, and fatigued in body, the coming darkness presented a dreary prospect of houseless misery. Two pennyworth of bread had sufficed during the day, but where were her aching limbs to repose at night. Her finances would not allow of a *decent* bed, and her feelings revolted at the idea of herding with people, who she had been told could procure *share* of a *poor* one, for a few halfpence; neither did she know where to seek for such a place. To parade the streets till morning was not to be thought of without agony, remembering to what insults she was liable, even would her strength have seconded such a resolution; but that was so far rebellious that it loudly called for rest and repose; and that moment a chandler's shop with lodgings on the window claimed her attention. Feebly

she entered, and in a faint voice enquired the price of a bed for the night?"

"Who will recommend you?" asked a sour-visaged woman behind the counter.

"Alas! I know no one in this part of the town, but I will honestly pay for my accommodation."

"So you say. But to make all sure, lay down a shilling, and turn in." "Ten-pence is all I have got, and if I pay that for a lodging, I shall want food to-morrow."

"Here's a pretty go! And do I pay scot and lot to take in trampers who have not a shilling in their pockets? 'Tis well my husband is not at home, Miss, he'd send you to Bridewell, you huzzy, and the fittest place for you o' my conscience."

Mary stayed to hear no more; she had on a former occasion been threatened with Bridewell, and, ignorant of the Police laws, doubted not but such a measure was practicable. Feebly creeping along she made up her mind to rest on the first friendly step which offered—for to subject herself to fresh insult by repeating her inquiry for a lodging

was not to be endured—when a cry of "stop thief," was heard behind her, and a man rushing past, owing to the narrowness of the pavement, pushed her down; and her head coming in contact with a stone vessel filled with vegetables, bled profusely, and reduced her to a state of insensibility.

The poor little shop, of which this mug and its contents formed a part, did not contain merchandise to the amount of five shillings; yet was this the whole stock in trade of as worthy a little woman as ever God put breath into. The sight of a young and lovely creature thus violently thrown upon her notice, excited feelings of sympathy and compassion; and having, with the assistance of some gaping bystanders, whom curiosity had drawn to the threshold, raised the insensible form of Mary, and placed it on a bench by the fire; she dismissed the crowd, and closed her door; then applying soft linen to the wound, and hartshorn to the nostrils of her patient, succeeded in stanching the blood, and restoring animation.

When Mary's senses fully returned, she

looked round the puny, crowded dwelling, but without recollection of any circumstance that could have made her its inmate. The cry of "stop thief," she perfectly remembered; and likewise a rude push from some ungentle being; but the habitation and its benevolent owner were alike strangers. "Where am I?" she feebly uttered, "and who are you that seem to take an interest in my fate? What has befallen me, and wherefore this blood?"

"Compose yourself, my poor child, and all will be well. A fall brought you headlong into my little shop, attended with a trifling scratch, but a few hours rest, and some of my neighbour's plaster, which I am never without, will soon heal it. Mean time, as you seem perfectly recovered, and it grows late, if your home be any where in the neighbourhood, or even at some trifling distance, I will support you to it, and explain to your friends the cause of your appearance."

The mention of friends drew a sigh from the bosom of Mary; and raising her clasped hands she cried, "Oh! turn me not out! I

have no friends to receive me—no habitation to shelter me—no food to support me." Then recollecting her little stock, she drew it from her pocket, and spreading it before the astonished retailer, continued, "Oh take it—take it all, so that I may avoid the cruel elements, and still more cruel taunts of my own species, and under this humble and protecting roof find safety. You know not—may you never know the indignities—the dangers of a situation you can avert, by giving me shelter only till the break of day."

"Shelter! poor child! Can my humble roof indeed shelter one, who speaks as thou dost? Be it so. I will not enquire what unfortunate chance reduced thee to thy present distress, but prepare thy bed, and lead thee to the repose thou needest. But before I go, here is a little warm milk, steep some bread in it, 'twill do thee good."

Mary followed her advice, and found the aliment warm and nourishing; then retiring to a homely, but clean bed, she lay reflecting on the vicissitudes which had reduced her to accept charity from the bricklayer, and the

vender of greens. The desertion of her husband too, at a moment so pregnant with danger, could be accounted for on no principle that did not bring agony to her distracted mind; until the lucky thought occurred, that probably her letter had been intercepted, and her frequent messages undelivered.

The more she thought of this, the clearer evidence it carried, till at length doubt was reduced to certainty; and the difficulties of the preceding day vanished, by recollecting, that the street she was anxious to find, adjoined that where the female penitentiary was situated, and so public a charity could not be otherwise than well known.

This train of thinking kept her awake the whole night; and as soon as day peeped through the small casement, she arose, and was received by her friendly hostess with no abatement, but rather added civility; from the certainty that however poor and friendless she now might be, her former life had been one of ease—perhaps affluence; and that impurity was not amongst her faults, otherwise she would have felt no dread of

being turned adrift at those hours, which the unfortunate choose for their nocturnal adventures.

After breakfast, Mary made known her wish to find ——— Street, and describing its vicinity to the penitentiary asylum, received every instruction, and likewise an invitation to return provided those she sought were either unable or unwiliing to protect her. Grateful for such considerate kindness, Mary promised to see her again whether the event of her walk was attended with success or disappointment. "To you my good friend," she continued, "I owe much, and the moment, if ever that arrive, in which I am enabled to shew my gratitude, will be the happiest event of my life." Having returned the change to her pocket, any part of which Mrs. Carter refused to retain, Mary, with renovated spirits, arising from the idea of not being as heretofore friendless, but that one roof at last was willing to shelter her, pursued her way; and though it was long and tedious, from frequently making a circuit, when a more clear knowledge

of the streets would have led her at right angles; yet the house once in view she forgot her fatigue, and giving a cheerful knock, where the last attempt was made with fear and trembling, the bold, unfeeling woman made her appearance; and with more than her accustomed acerbity, denied all knowledge of the letter or messenger. "A strange man," she added, "has been enquiring after you, though your pretended husband seems to care little about you; he comes not, nor ever will I'll be bound;—he knows better than to shew his face where he owes money; and as to the letter you talk of leaving, it will be of no use, for I shall trouble myself no more with you, or your paltry concerns; except it be my good fortune to catch your gallant, and in that case to *Quod* he goes."

Before Mary had time to enquire about the strange man, who she little doubted was the detested Clayton, the door was again thrown to, but she had suffered too severely by one essay, to come within the chance of a second. And purchasing a roll, with which she beguiled the way, arrived safe at Mrs.

Carter's little dwelling, and more than ever appreciated that kindness, which provoked a comparison between the humble tenant of a shed, and the mistress of a house goodly in appearance, but whose owner possessed a soul that might have been comprised in a nut shell.

After sitting a few minutes, during which Mrs. Carter bustled amongst her tea cups, Mary complained of a pain in her head, and a shivering sensation in her limbs. This aroused the good woman's attention; and when she perceived the hectic flush on her cheek, she bitterly blamed her own negligence in suffering her guest to face the cold, after the over night's accident. "But fear not, my child," added she; "a cup, of hot tea, and a good night's rest, for the last you know was but a wakeful one, will put every thing to rights; or, if it should not, I have a neighbour, a distant relation indeed, who always prescribes for me, and I am sure will do the same for any one under my roof. Shall I call him now?"

"Not this evening; I feel heavy and will

try to court sleep. The drowzy fit has not been upon me, except for a few minutes, during the last two nights, and I hail its return as the harbinger of restored health."

But Mary was again disappointed, no refreshing slumbers marked the present night, but restless and disturbed, she counted the hourly strokes from an adjoining steeple, and heard every call of the scarcely intelligible watchman. A feverish thirst too shrivelled her parched lips, and when Mrs. Carter paid her maternal visit, the poor sufferer appeared with a face of scarlet, and eyes almost bursting from their sockets. Now indeed it was time to try her neighbour's skill, and without further procrastination he was summoned to the bed side. "Very bad indeed, my good woman," said the Doctor as his finger rested on her pulse; "beats at the rate of a hundred and twenty.—When was she taken, and *what* has she taken?" Mrs. Carter answered him as well as she was able, and amongst other information pointed out the wound above her temple; that however was in a healing state, and he attributed her disorder, from

what he could gather, to uneasiness of mind, fatigue, and watchfulness. Every thing was ordered that gave a prospect of relief, but till the disorder arrived at a crisis, nothing could be ascertained ; "youth, and a naturally good constitution," he observed, "were in her favor, and those were advantages of material importance."

Before night a delirium of the most ungovernable nature took firm possession of her mind, and force was requisite to keep her in bed. Her husband, her beloved Frederick, she declared was dying, and she must receive his last breath; "and who so proper," she proceeded "as myself? my father gave me to him on his death-bed—left me as a legacy in his will—and no force on earth has power to keep me from him.—Clayton and Mrs. Leesom deceived me—they raised the wind that deprived me of Julia's note, but the poor bricklayer gave me a substitute, and now I laugh at their malice."—In such discourse, but all tending to one point, namely, her sufferings, and Frederick's absence, passed nearly the following week; at the end of

that period her fever was partly reduced, but left the poor victim so weak and languid, that life could scarcely be said to survive; and several weeks elapsed ere comfortable nourishment and good nursing restored her, even to that small degree of strength she possessed previous to her confinement.

During this period Mrs. Carter had neglected her little shop, for Mary claimed all her attention; and having a small sum of money before hand, she cheerfully procured those strengthening comforts, without which her dear child, as she fondly called her, would inevitably have sunk into a decline; but under whose reviving influence she gained daily some portion of strength. She had just returned from her first short airing, when two rude fellows burst into the house, and laid an execution on the goods for rent due the preceding day.

Mrs. Carter would have argued against the cruelty and injustice of this proceeding, but was interrupted by one of the men observing, "Come, come, mother Carter, as you have retired from business, you surely

cannot be at a loss for five pounds; and if you are, your fine lady-lodger must *post* the *coal;* you have been very good to her, I understand, and now it is her turn to be good to you, one turn deserves another, and pay both your debt and her own."

This attack set Mary's poverty and obligations in terrible array before her. The dreadful truth that Mrs. Carter had been supporting her with the money reserved for her rent, flashed with terrifying conviction upon her mind, and her utter incapability of rendering the smallest return, either now or, she feared, hereafter, threw her into an agony of self-upbraiding, and Mrs. Carter forgot her own misfortunes, in endeavouring to sooth the sorrows of her lodger. But this scene of mutual tenderness and feeling was lost upon the bailiff; the rent he must have, and nothing but the goods would be an equivalent. "Stay one moment," said the mortified owner of the cabin, "and I'll fetch my friend, the Doctor; he has not a heart callous to distress, though you have." And away she ran in search of the worthy

apothecary; but disappointment was visible in her countenance when, returning, she informed Mary he was out of town. "Then," replied the bailiff, "we must begin a rummage. Come, Ned, lend a helping hand with these chairs into the cart; odso! here's a decent cloak, carry that home for my wife, and, may-be, we shall find another for your's."

"That cloak," cried Mrs. Carter, snatching it out of his hand, "belongs to this young lady; and touch it at your peril."

"Peril, or no peril," replied the brute, "I'll have it."

"Dispute it not, my dear Mrs. Carter," said Mary, "if that trifle can repay the smallest part of my obligations to you, I shall be happy, and the man only jokes when he talks of appropriating it to his own use. Besides, a thought strikes me; if you, friend, will only wait until to-morrow morning—and you can have no interest in distressing this worthy woman, provided you get the rent—I will make you a present of that cloak for your lenity."

"Spoke like an emperor, by Jove! As you say, Miss, I would as soon get the money by fair means as foul, and twenty-four hours can make no great difference; so come along, Ned, and carry the cloak, you dog."

The house was no sooner vacated than Mary opened her plan of operation. "What, my dear friend and mother, I could never ask immediately for myself, I hesitate not, circumstanced as we are, to implore in your name. Moses Bentley, the most benevolent of men—a Quaker by profession—expends his large property in doing good. He once intended me a service; but for reasons you shall sometime learn—reasons which tell not to my disadvantage—I declined his kindness, and therefore have a claim, which, when he hears your story, I am sure he will not dispute. It is true I know not his residence; but I am well acquainted with the means through which it may be traced; and as my road lies past the door of our former lodging, I will once more subject myself to impertinence, for something—I know not what—tells me I yet shall see my Frederick.

Besides, should I be every way unsuccessful, which God forbid! we have gained time; your friendly apothecary will probably be home to-night, and he is a stay on which you may rest your hopes, should every other fail. Come—look cheerful—the day is before me—the sun shines with genial warmth—and by the time your afternoon tea is ready I hope to return the harbinger of glad tidings."

Mrs. Carter's mind had been so agitated by the morning's event, that she forgot Mary's recent illness and present imbecility; otherwise, it is probable she would either have given a decided negative to the plan entirely, or at least have accompanied her in the execution of it. Instead of this, Mary had been gone a considerable time before she even missed her; then her weakness and incapacity for so long a walk occurred with aggravated force, and, "what will become of her?" issued involuntarily from her lips. The die was, however, cast, and in waiting the result, the anxious woman forgot her dinner-hour, and prepared her kettle and

crockery with more of hope than expectation, that her interesting lodger would ever again join her sociable board. Five o'clock struck—the sixth hour arrived—but without bringing Mary. The night was dark and cold for the month of May—a drizzling rain likewise began to fall, and Mary was unprepared to encounter it. Every gentle step that passed the window she fancied was her's; and more than once ran to the door, in the almost certainty of finding her *protegée*. But time brought only disappointment; and she was finishing the last cup of her solitary meal, when a smart knock upon the door made her start. A moment's reflection, however, convinced her it could not be Mary!—No! Mary would have opened the door; and if not able, a single modest rap would have sufficed; but this was rude and boisterous—the run-away alarm of some unlucky boy. As she settled this in her own mind, and prepared to wash her tea-cups, the knocking was repeated; when, opening the door, a gentleman appeared,

and asking if her name was Carter, walked in and closed the entrance.

The smile of good-nature and affability played upon the stranger's countenance, and seeing the tea-equipage, he requested, if not too much trouble, to be favoured with a cup.

"Alack, Sir!" replied the Dame, "your honour is not used to drink such poor tea as my humble board affords."

"But my wife is; and where she has been treated with the kindness of a daughter, and the hospitality of a friend, her grateful husband trusts he may be indulged with one cup."

"Oh, Sir! trifle not with my feelings—say quickly—is it Mary of whom you are speaking?"

"It is, good mother!—your own Mary!—your's by kindness and adoption!—your's by sympathy and benevolence!—She could not return herself this evening; but deputed me her substitute, to drive away the fiends who haunted you this morning, and to assure you of her duty and affection."

"Where found you the poor child?—Pardon my tears—where found you Mary?"

"When she left you this morning full of the benevolent design of seeking relief from Moses Bentley, her spirits buoyant beyond her strength, carried her along at a quicker pace than her debilitated frame would uphold, until, exhausted with fatigue, and pale from exertion, I found her, nearly fainting, at my benefactor's door in Lombard-street. At the first view I concluded her weakness to proceed from want, knowing in what a state I left her, and unable to trace her beyond our wretched garret; but when she recovered, and entered into the detail of your pitying kindness, and the consequences which followed, at the same time assuring me, that no sleep would visit your pillow this night, if left in ignorance of her fate, I slipped out, after seeing my Mary comfortable in bed; and hope the intelligence I bring, and the note I, by my wife's order, give to her mother, will act as an opiate, and procure you sweet and comfortable repose.

Good night! To-morrow your daughter will take her dinner with you as usual."

"And will not you, Sir, honour me too?"

"My company, my good dame, would only be an interruption to the confidential communication she means to make; but in the evening I shall fetch her home; mean time, farewell! and God bless you!"

Vivacity was the natural temper of Frederick's mind, though he has hitherto appeared of a sombre cast, and certainly not without reason. Misfortune and griping poverty are not subjects of merriment—dishonour, and a loved, lost wife, are not objects on which we can dwell with pleasure—but three of these enemies to happiness were now done away, and the fourth was fading gradually from his mind.

It is true a fifth cause of grief might be traced, namely, the depravity of his mother; but Frederick was not one of those who reverence a parent, merely because she bears the name. He wanted something more substantial on which to build affection. *That*

Mr. Litchfield had liberally supplied, and in his grave reposed all the filial piety Hannah Leigh's son was capable of. He had beheld, without those sensations which some authors say are inherent in the human breast, and draw us involuntarily towards the author of our being—the woman who gave him birth; but without any other emotion than what pity for female depravity necessarily creates, and that desire which springs in the breast of every man to draw erring creatures from the paths of vice; beyond this, Mrs. Mellor—or Stokes—for by that name he now knew her, interested not her son; for virtue claims no kindred with vice—morality and religion hold no voluntary intercourse with sin and profaneness.

Had Mrs. Stokes been poor, Frederick would, from a rigid sense of duty, have shielded her to the best of his ability from the snares of future temptation; but hearing she was splendidly married, he could only pity her husband, and endeavour to forget that such a being as herself existed.

CHAP. VIII.

A SEPARATION—A FAMILY PARTY—AND MUCH UNEASINESS RESULTING FROM FALSEHOOD.

PARTIES were now beginning to form for the summer; for people in high life do not adjourn to their country seats to enjoy the pleasures of retirement after the fatigues of a dissipated winter; but collect a group, the more heterogeneous the better, since amusement is the great aim of these time-killers; and whether that comes in the form of sense and reason, or in the more common garb of the ridiculous, the frivolous, or the affected, it is welcomed as a mean to destroy the tedium of long days; the odiousness of green fields and sun-beams, and the never enough to be abhorred visits of the Squire—the Rector—the Doctor—and their dowdy, notable, and simpering wives.

The Duchess of Newland's party for open-

ing the summer campaign, consisted of her own immediate family, including Leslie Talbot, and Philippa Heathcote, the niece of her Grace; the Countess of Milford, Mrs. Bloomfield, Miss Auburn, Sir Laurence Lounge, Captain Corbett, and the Rev. Mr. Lillyman, the clerical Adonis mentioned in the city ball. Lady Ann and Fanny had received a pressing invitation; likewise Lord Moseley and Lady Maria; but Lady Ann declined the party as being too gay, and Fanny, on the score of duty and filial tenderness. Lord Moseley assigned no particular reason for his refusal, and his sister's presence could not be dispensed with at Castle Priory.

In less than a week after the birth-day, the fashionables above-named, except Mrs. Bloomfield, who promised to follow in a day or two, left town for Newland Abbey; a fine gothic mansion, situated in the county of Oxford, and within ten miles of its famed university. On the same day Mr. O'Brian also departed for Ireland, intending so to settle his affairs in that kingdom, that he might fix his future residence in the vicinity

of his newly-found relatives. But four days only elapsed after his departure ere Lady Ann received the following letter in a strange hand, and bearing the Chester post-mark.

Chester, June 14*th*, 1812.

MADAM,

I AM requested by Mr. O'Brian, who now lies dangerously ill at the Feathers Inn, to inform your Ladyship that the Mail coach overturned within a mile of this city, whereby his left arm was broke and his body otherwise much contused. We have carefully set the limb, but his feverish symptoms, unless timely subdued, leave us more to fear than hope. He begs me to say that if your Ladyship would condescend to visit a sick man you would do him more good than all the faculty in Chester. This, between ourselves, I beg leave to deny; for broken arms are not set by friendship, nor fevers cured by the mere ties of propinquity. Nevertheless, I think your Ladyship's presence might aid our skill; particularly if a

young lady whom Mr. O'Brian designates Fanny, were to be of the travelling party; but that he bids me say is a point on which your Ladyship must be sole judge.

I remain, Madam,
with high respect,
Your Ladyship's obedient and
very humble Servant,
SILVESTER BROOMHEAD
Surgeon.

Lady Ann called to her aid the advice of Mr. Strictland respecting the Surgeon's letter. "You see, my good friend," she observed, "how inconsistently Mr. Broomhead writes. First he alarms me by the immediate danger of his patient, and in the same breath jokes about broken arms and fevers, as though they were matters of no importance. What am I to think?"

"That Silvester Broomhead is a humourist, and probably introduces his witty sallies into the very chamber of death. I think pleasantry in a doctor has its use as well as

physic; and I would no more introduce a morose-looking, saturnine-visaged practitioner into a sick room, particularly where the patient was fanciful, otherwise hippish, than I would an undertaker; I think one would frighten the poor sick body as little as the other. But what does your Ladyship determine upon?"

"Togo, undoubtedly."

"And take Fanny?"

"I should rather not. It will be a hurrying journey from which she can derive neither pleasure nor improvement; and a melancholy visitation, if the surgeon's forebodings are just, from which I would spare her feelings. Miss Cavendish, you know, will be here this evening, and she I am sure will cheerfully accompany me."

"If we could properly dispose of Fanny, I would offer myself as your escort; but unfortunately Mrs. Bloomfield leaves town to morrow for Newland Abbey. But however her grace would be highly flattered if you could consent to leave Fanny in her care during your enforced absence;

and she might with propriety visit Oxfordshire under Mrs. Bloomfield's protection."

Fanny, finding a temporary absence from her mother indispensable, cheerfully agreed to Mr. Strictland's arrangement; and sending a note to Mrs. Bloomfield, assisted in preparing the separate packages: during which Lady Ann dispatched the following letter to the Duchess of Newland.

MADAM,

I AM taking a liberty which will require all your grace's goodness to pardon. After refusing Fanny to your earnest solicitations, I am enforced to beg your protection of her during my own melancholy journey into Cheshire, where a sick relative requires my presence. Into very few hands would I trust my treasure, but your grace is an exception to every thing that can be objectionable; and if you will only pardon this seeming variableness, I shall begin my tour without one care for her safety, but many for the trouble I am imposing on your grace.

I beg to be remembered with friendship by the Duke and your family circle, and remain

Your grace's obliged friend,
&c. &c. &c.
ANN FITZ-YORK.

Lombard Street, June 14*th,* 1812.

P. S. Fanny, who travels *en suite* with Mrs. Bloomfield, will pay her personal respects to-morrow.

The following day two post chaises were in readiness to receive the travellers. Whilst Mrs. Bloomfield and her charge proceeded through Uxbridge, Lady Ann's party took the Barnet road, where we shall not follow them, but proceed with our heroine into Oxfordshire.

Philippa Heathcote, niece to her grace of Newland, possessed an ample independent fortune; and having determined in her own mind to be a Duchess, from the moment Leslie Talbot was pronounced presumptive heir to his uncle, spared no pains to awaken the same desires in the young man, but hitherto without effect. Being nearly con-

nected with the Duchess, for whom he felt an almost filial respect, he always treated her niece with politeness and some shew of regard; but without flattering her with hopes that the desired end would be accomplished. Yet, having as yet professed no extraordinary admiration for any other female, she met the Abbey party in high spirits, and more than ever resolved to carry her plans.

The family were assembled at breakfast when Lady Ann's letter arrived: and the undisguised pleasure Leslie expressed at the expected arrival of so charming a visitor, gave Philippa the first jealous pang she ever experienced. But perfectly mistress of hypocrisy, she artfully concealed her vexation, and spoke of her own promised happiness in the society of so charming a friend. "Auburn and I," she continued, "shall have a companion of our own sex and age, and a party of three is so delightful! Two girls would soon grow tired of each other; but a third creates such enchanting variety, and Miss Fitz-York is, according to Leslie's re-

port, so good, as well as beautiful, that it will be our own faults, Auburn, if we do not profit by the acquaintance."

Lady Milford, whose partiality for Fanny has been already recorded, cautioned Philippa against raising her expectations to a height which would defeat their own purpose. "If I wished," she proceeded, "to lessen the value of an object, there is no one method so effectual as high-fraught panegyric. Besides, Miss Fitz-York, by education, from which our habits and opinions take their bias, is ill calculated to shine in circles of *haut ton*; her graces and accomplishments are not obtrusive—they do not command homage—but are modest and retiring as her virtues. Neither is her person calculated for general admiration; but the heart which once really owns her power, in my opinion will never bow at the shrine of any other object."

Philippa looked attentively at Leslie during this description of her dreaded rival, and fancied she saw his countenance lighted up with more than usual animation. But de-

termined not to betray those emotions which inwardly tormented her, replied with much assumed gaiety, "Well, I wish this modest, retiring creature would arrive, that I might judge from my own observation; for between Leslie's praise, and your Ladyship's commendation, Miss Fitz-York must be a rara-avis—a faultless creature with whom poor Auburn and I shall stand no chance of competition. Did you ever see her, Sir Laurence?"

"Never," replied the Baronet; "I never had that precise degree of happiness."

"But I have," interrupted Mr. Lillyman. "I had the superlative honour of dancing in her party at a city ball, and really I thought her tolerable for a country-bred Miss.

"Tolerable!" echoed the Countess with a sneer.

"Yes, my dear good Lady," replied Mr. Lillyman, "you know there *can* be no *comparison* between country and town breeding; and if that be allowed, Miss Auburn and the lovely Philippa must carry all com-

petitorship hollow. Don't you think so, Baronet?"

"I have not taken the trouble to think at all upon the subject;" replied Sir Laurence yawning, "the first time I do, you, Lillyman, shall profit by my cogitations."

"I would that Bloomfield were here," observed the Countess.

"For what particular reason?" asked Leslie.

"To quicken Sir Laurence's *thinking* faculties," replied her Ladyship; "if they are not upon the alert when the widow comes, she will goad and spur him till he scarcely knows whether he is a man or a horse."

"She is an odious creature" observed the pretty Miss Auburn, "and ought not to be tolerated in civilized society. I wonder your grace should invite her."

"She is a *character* you know, my dear," said the Duchess, "and therefore valuable in the country. But more than that, she is a respectable, well-informed woman; and though her satire cuts keenly, it is never ap-

plied but where the patient can be cured by no other weapon."

"Patients cured!" echoed Sir Laurence, who had partially heard the foregoing speech; "What is our party to be enriched by the presence of a female practitioner?"

"Yes," replied the Countess, "one well versed in cauterizing the human mind; and who applies her knowledge with so much skill that she seldom fails in effecting a cure."

"She is a terrible old woman." cried Corbett."

"Have you found her so, Captain?" asked lady Milford archly; "that is indirectly pleading guilty; for Mrs. Bloomfield is only terrible to those who are wilfully vicious, or glaringly faulty."

The party now dispersed to spend the morning as inclination or the whim of the moment prompted.

The Duchess, at those hours when her guests assembled around her, was a truly well-bred woman, and a most attentive hostess. But the time betwixt breakfast and

dinner, was independent of all controul, and appropriated as though she were herself a visitor, and not amenable to the dictates of hospitality. "Were it otherwise," her grace observed, "the owner of a mansion like ours, where there is a constant succession of company, would lead a worse life than the mistress of an Inn, for she would have all the trouble, without any of the profit."

The party were taking their seats at the dinner table, when Mrs. Bloomfield's chaise whirled round the approach, and a thundering knock caused a momentary pause in their proceedings. "Now for the lovely Fanny," said his Grace. The words were scarcely uttered, when Leslie rushed from the apartment, and, whilst the company were still standing, returned leading the Widow and her blooming companion; whose Hebe-like figure was rendered more interesting by exercise; whilst the careless irregularity of her auburn ringlets, formed a contrast with the exact uniformity and formal precision of those just released from the

torturing fingers of their Abigails, highly in Fanny's favor.

After our heroine had paid her respects, and been introduced to the strangers; she would have apologized for her travelling dress, but was silenced in the onset by Mrs. Bloomfield, who loudly exclaimed, "After dinner, child, we will have as much as you please on the subject. But the viands look so tempting, and my appetite is in such good humour, that the eloquence of an angel would be annoying, until I have paid my respects to something more substantial. So take your usual places, good folks; whilst I and Miss Fitz-York, for this day at least, have the honour of being the Duke's supporters."

The widow's arrangement being made in a positive key, was agreed to; and the usual attentive ceremonies—the general observations upon meats and made dishes, uninterrupted by Mrs. Bloomfield, except by an occasional emphatic, "Pshaw!" finished the repast. But the servants were no sooner withdrawn, than she addressed Sir Laurence

Lounge, who had been more than commonly voluble during dinner; by asking his opinion of the men and manners of the present day.

"My opinion, madam!" he replied in accents visibly alarmed, "Why mine?" "Because you have been so eloquent upon trifling matters, that upon subjects of importance, to which you doubtless pay equal attention, I am impatient to derive information and amusement."

"Really, madam," replied the simple Baronet, "I am at this moment totally unprepared for a discussion of this nature. The fact is, we leave those things to poor devils who live by their wits ———"

"I am sorry for it," interrupted his tormentor: "the study of men and manners is surely not less important than the study of cookery; but perhaps the meridian of your understanding can encompass the one, and is not extensive enough to comprehend the other. In that case the fates alone are to blame, in giving you a title and fortune,

thereby destroying a useful member of the culinary art."

"I cannot understand why you are so cursed severe upon me individually," said Sir Laurence: "the observations I have had the honour to make upon the skill of his Grace's cook, are opinions that flow as naturally whilst we are eating ——"

"As a dissertation upon wines, and the manner of producing them, follows the removal of the cloth," observed Mrs. Bloomfield. "Upon that principle, the hours spent at dinner, and during the dessert, which actually employ one-fourth of our waking existence, must necessarily be devoted to a discussion on eating and drinking. But with all due respect to those indispensable avocations, I think suiting the word to the action may be dispensed with on this occasion, and subjects of intellectual importance substituted with no bad effect. What think you, Mr. Lillyman?"

"M—e, Madam!" faultered out *the beauty of holiness*, a name he was generally known by.

"Yes," replied the incorrigible widow, "should not you very much prefr a discourse upon white hands, ivory teeth, and well-cut nails, to the merits of fish sauce and fricasees? I am sure you would, and as they are subjects of *equal* importance, I know you will second me if I propose that topic for to morrow's dinner discussion, provided no enlightened member of this society can point out a theme of more interest."

Sir Laurence joyfully repaid Mr. Lillyman's former triumphant looks; and turning to Miss Auburn whispered something to which she audibly answered "Shocking! not to be borne with in civilized society!"

"True, Miss Auburn," replied the widow, "Such an impeachment of our understandings is not to be borne patiently; therefore do *you* propose a subject on which we can exercise our *minds*."

The Duchess, willing to change the discourse, enquired concerning their journey, and hoped it had been attended by no accident.

"No accident on our parts;" replied Mrs.

Bloomfield, "but an adventure, in which Miss Fitz-York had nearly destroyed the life of a fellow creature."

"I!" said Fanny blushing.

"Yes, you, my dear. As we were stepping into the chaise at Uxbridge, young Warbrick, of charioteering notoriety, dressed with a nice regard to costume, drove up to the Inn door four in hand, and to my no small amazement called for a *flash of lightning!* Ere I had time to construe these words, they were explained by the Landlord bawling out, *a glass of gin for his honor!!* But his honor at that moment caught sight of my charge, and all *lightning*, except what *flashed from her eyes*, seemed to be forgotten; for he refused the *gin*, and until the chaise drove off, Fanny kept undivided possession of his attention.

"We had scarcely proceeded a mile when he again overtook us, and such was the attractive quality of ——— don't blush, my dear—I dare say I was the magnet—but whether or not, his eye, instead of minding the direction of his steeds, was turned back

upon us, until the slender wheel of his Barouche coming in contact with the more clumsy one of a waggon, tilted his honor into the ditch. Common humanity made us stop; but finding the accident unattended by any consequences, except a muddy exterior, we left his servant to perform the cleansing operation, and his honor to regret that his attention had taken a retrogade direction. Warbrick, I am told, has a benevolent heart: What a pity that fashion and notoriety should throw him out of his proper bias, and lead him to imitate the dress, and copy the manners of people, who cannot have an idea in common with himself except their skill in driving." "I wonder *you* don't take him in hand, Mrs. Bloomfield," said the Countess. "We never happen to meet," replied the widow, "except as this morning by accident. Whenever we do, he shall not be lost for want of a little wholesome correction; because I have a presentiment that Warbrick was designed by nature for something superior to a coachman."

"What say you to an adjournment;" asked the Duchess. "The drawing-room is much cooler than this apartment, and if any one prefer cards, the tables are by this time prepared."

"Cards!" echoed Mrs. Bloomfield. "Surely this delightful evening is not to be sacrificed to the four aces. Suffer me to propose an amendment. Miss Fitz-York, if I may judge by sympathy, has had sitting enough for one day; the prospect and the weather both invite, and who can refuse to obey them?"

The widow's amendment was unanimously adopted, at least none *dared* to oppose her, and a walk in the beautiful pleasure grounds surrounding Newland Abbey was followed by an evening where rational conversation, intermixed with music, left little regret; if any, it was carefully concealed, that cards had for one day been ousted. Leslie Talbot ranked amongst the first musical amateurs of the day; the Duchess and her younger daughter were no mean adepts in the science; and Fanny, both on the piano and harp, add-

ed to the general enjoyment. A light supper finished the day, at which Leslie secured a seat by the side of our heroine; and by watchful attention, and sprightly converse, poured gall into the cup of Philippa, but left Fanny without a single sorrow, except what arose from the absence of her beloved mother.

It was to Fanny's influence over the mind of Corbett that he sacrificed the eclat of the duel; for knowing Lady Ann's attachment to Moseley, the proposal of secresy was acceded to with joy, since her knowledge of it would have prevented all future intercourse, and Fanny's inflexibility he resolved to overcome at all hazards. 'Tis true, Leslie's marked attention gave him little less alarm than they conveyed to the bosom of Philippa; but when he saw his own face in the mirror, and compared its smooth and brilliant surface with the less favored countenance of his honorable competitor, he smiled at the idea of rivalry, and sunk to repose with the delightful certainty of being irresistible.

The following day, on the strength of old acquaintance, and for the pleasure of making

Lady Ann and Mr. Strictland, the topic of conversation, Fanny suffered him, during a general ramble in the Park, to monopolize some degree of her attention; for which Philippa gave him ample opportunity by drawing Leslie aside; whilst Sir Laurence and Mr. Lillyman attached themselves to the Duke's daughters, to whom likewise Miss Auburn clung, as to the strongest party. These moments Corbett endeavoured to turn to his advantage by the artillery of soft looks—deep-fetched sighs—and painting the pleasures of reciprocal affection. But finding these inefficient, he changed his tone; described the miseries of unrequited love—the torments of a concealed passion—and ended by saying that none but a fool would declare an attachment before he was in some measure encouraged by hopes of success. "Love is of itself torment enough," he observed, "without having scorn likewise to encounter; and that female's generosity will be trebly valued, who setting the arts of prudery and coquetry at defiance, nobly confides in the man of her choice; and by those encouraging attentions, which love

only knows, lead him to believe that his declaration will be accepted."

Fanny, though young in years, was not to be caught by arguments so flimsy, though love had seconded the sophist. But feeling towards Captain Corbett no sentiment warmer than perfect indifference, she shewed an impatience during the foregoing address not very flattering to his vanity; and finding he expected an answer, replied, "Captain Corbett, I cannot imagine how this strange subject came to be introduced. Love is a theme on which I have no experience, and therefore can be no judge; but ignorant as I confess myself, I think your arguments unfriendly to female delicacy; and feel no pride in being the confidante of such a passion, much less should I aspire to be the object of it."

"Indeed!"

"In very truth."

"Your affections are otherwise engaged then?"

"Does that follow? Cannot I be indifferent towards Captain Corbett without a preference elsewhere?"

"I think my pretensions would insure me the favour of almost any woman who could boast a disengaged heart."

"I will not deny the general position, because, perhaps, I am an incompetent judge of the pretensions you allude to. But of this you may rest assured, that I shall ever remain an *exception* to the rule you think so *positive*, and nothing but the most *egregious vanity*, could advance for *truth*, what appears to me to be the height of *folly* and *presumption*."

At the conclusion of this speech, Fanny turned away, intending to join her female associates; but they were too distant for an immediate meeting, and Corbett walked sullenly by her side, pondering on means to revenge the proud contempt her words so pointedly expressed. At length he dissipated the silence by hoping Miss Fitz-York was not offended past forgiveness; promising if she could forget his folly, and forgive his temerity—to which he added a hope that she would not expose his fault, by communicating it to those whose lash he dreaded—to observe in future the most respectful silence,

and to confine his ill-fated prepossession within the precincts of friendship.

Fanny, in whom pity was a stronger passion than anger; and who knew there was sufficient opening for Mrs. Bloomfield's sarcastic raillery, without adding to it by exposing his vanity, promised not to betray by her own behaviour that any thing unpleasant had occurred, since it would likewise expose herself to animadversions she wished carefully to avoid. So that when they joined their companions, a common observer would have imagined the tête à tête had been productive of nothing but pleasure to either party. Corbett in particular affected an unusual flow of animation—hoped the walk had been equally agreeable to them all, and declared that he never recollected one, in which pleasure and profit had been so intimately blended.

Fanny bestowed a look of reproach at the uncalled for duplicity of this confession; but Leslie, whose attentive eye was fixed upon her, read in that look nothing but reproof for betraying what every delicate female wishes to keep secret, for that love had been

the subject of their conference, he never gave himself leave to doubt, or if he had, Corbett's declaration after the ladies retired, that Miss Fitz-York's angel mind surpassed even the beauty of her person, and that he was the happiest fellow in existence, would have decided it. Leslie sighed when these inauspicious words returned upon his mind, and seldom were they absent;—their import filled him with regret that he had not sooner become acquainted with our heroine, "for then," he mentally said, "*I* mght have been *the happiest fellow in existence.* And yet, if Miss Fitz-York has bestowed her affections upon a thing so vain—so frivolous as Corbett, how could a prior knowledge have benefitted me, who have no personal pretensions, comparatively, and whose mental superiority would have availed nothing with one, who could be gained by trifling and foppery?"

When our noble hostess led the way to her dining parlour, Leslie loitered behind; not bearing the idea of willingly yielding his seat to Corbett, and yet not knowing how to

retain it in opposition to his superior claims. But when he entered and found the Captain at her Grace's right hand, and with voluble eagerness endeavouring to assist in the arduous task of carving; he advanced with alacrity to the seat reserved, and placed himself between Mrs. Bloomfield and Fanny with pleasure equal to the pain he felt at the idea of being superseded.

When Leslie had seated himself, he said in a low voice, "I fear I usurp a seat that would have been more agreeably filled by another?"

"Indeed you do not," replied Fanny in the same key;" I know no other who can fill it so pleasantly."

"Thank you," he continued with animation, "I will endeavour at least to support the character you honour me with, though I would much rather be an *agreeable*, than a *pleasant* companion."

"Are they not synonymous?" asked our heroine. "No person can be pleasant I think without being agreeable."

"But are not *some people agreeable*, without being *pleasant?*" interrogated Leslie.

"That depends a good deal upon our own feelings," replied Fanny, "and likewise upon the idea we conceive of pleasantry."

"Do not some ladies," he proceeded, fixing his penetrating eyes upon her, "place their *affections* upon objects, whom the world in general think so *disagreeable*, that we can only wonder at their taste, and feel compassion for their blindness?"

"You must find some established standard for taste," answered his fair neighbour, "before you can wonder at the dissimilarity of people's opinions. 'Tis like beauty, not governed by fixed rules, and I should no more wonder at a person differing with me in opinion about either, than I should compassionate him, because he was unlike me in person, or had passions and feelings different from mine." "Leslie," said the Duchess, "what agreeable subject are you and Miss Fitz-York so earnestly discussing?"

"I can scarcely explain it to your Grace;" replied Leslie." We are rather differing about

words I believe than discussing a particular subject."

"Miss Fitz-York is an intolerable monopolist," observed Philippa; "all the morning she exclusively engaged Captain Corbett; and now Leslie forgets his usual politeness; and confines his attentions, when they ought to be diffusive and general."

"I beg your pardon, Miss Heathcote," rejoined Fanny;" but I assure you the morning's monopoly was by no means a matter of choice, and Mr. Talbot's particular attention, at this moment, is merely an effort to convince me, that he can be both pleasant and agreeable."

"Then you had your doubts upon that subject?" said Lady Albina. "They were without foundation," continued her more animated sister. "Every body allows our dear Leslie to be the very best creature in the world; and wherever he fixes his serious affections, the lady cannot be otherwise than a happy creature. I once thought to have laid siege myself; but we have lived so long as brother and sister, and I love him so well in that capacity, that I could never fancy

him in any other light. You look upon him as a brother too, Philippa, I dare say ?"

"N—o! not exactly," replied the young lady.

"Then you would marry him, if he were to offer himself?" again questioned Lady Sidney.

"Whenever he does me that honour," answered Philippa, somewhat piqued "your ladyship shall be the first to hear of it."

"When he bows at the shrine of the lovely Heathcote, the honour will be all his own." observed Lillyman.

"Vastly well, indeed, Lilly," cried Sir Laurence. "Who says *the beauty of holiness* has confined his studies to theology ?"

"Nobody that *knows* him," replied the widow, sarcastically.

These four words completely sealed the lips of the last two speakers. But little Auburn, who sympathized in their mortification, observed, "I am sure Mr. Lillyman would not be half so agreeable if he were always poring over sermons."

"Not *half* so agreeable!" echoed the

widow. "Heaven keep his acquaintance, if his agreeableness was reduced one *half*, when with the *whole* he is scarcely bearable."

"Excuse me, Miss Auburn, from differing from you on so essential a point as Mr. Lillyman's merits; you, doubtless, view them through a magnifying glass, whilst I, more fastidious, turn the other end, and find them diminished till they are really imperceptible."

"Any news in your paper this morning, Mrs. Bloomfield?" asked Lady Milford, with a good-natured design to change the conversation. "Yes! Intelligence of general importance," gravely replied the widow. "Indeed!" said his Grace.

"Really, Duke."

"Of what nature? mine was stupidly uninteresting."

"That's because your Grace wants taste to relish those important facts, which at this season of the year fill the columns of our daily papers."

"Of what nature are those facts?" asked the Duchess.

"Attend," replied the widow taking a newspaper from her pocket, "and wonder

at the communicative importance of these editors. 'The Duke and Duchess of Newland are gone with a large party of fashionables to Newland Abbey. The Earl and Countess of Derby set out with a numerous retinue for Knowsley Park. Sir Gilbert and Lady Heathcote are upon a visit in Hampshire. Louis the eighteenth is at the seat of Earl Talbot. Napoleon, whom we have repeatedly *assassinated—on paper*, still lives, though in a state of *mental derangement.* And, such is the rage for ancient literature, two thousand two hundred and sixty pounds were given at the Roxburgh sale for a single volume of Boccacio's Works. Such is the important news, and such the estimation in which poets are held after they have been buried a few centuries; when the probability exists, that this very man was neglected whilst living, and frequently wanted that dinner, his pen was unable to procure."

"I am sorry," observed Lady Milford, "that the annals of our own country give too much colouring to the picture you have drawn. The poverty of poets is become

proverbial; and we never hear the name mentioned without associating in idea, a spare-figure, a meagre countenance, a thread-bare coat, and a garret. The want and misery in which some of our best writers have lived and died, reflects upon us as a nation, and doubtless fills many opulent individuals with remorse; who feel conscious, when too late, that they *could* have softened their rugged path in this world, and smoothed their way to eternity, but *did* not."

"I am far from intending," said Leslie, "to defend the conduct of those who suffer genius to live without patronage, and sink to the grave perhaps for the want of it; but may we not with justice attach improvidence to these followers of the muses—a carelessness of futurity altogether unaccountable? May we not say, in fact, that genius and common sense are woefully at variance?"

"Every day's experience proves it," replied the Duke. "And I can explain it on no other principle than extreme abstraction of mind, so involved in one pursuit, that nothing merely worldly can find entrance."

"That apology might obtain," answered Leslie, "were the Poets who have lived in poverty, and died almost for want, of that studious and abstracted turn your grace supposes them in common. But I beg leave to deny the premises. Conviviality and a thoughtless neglect of the morrow have been their stumbling blocks; an improvident lack of saving knowledge, more than neglect, have brought them to a premature grave, and left the world to regret that genius and talent are seldom accompanied with prudence."

"You are right, Talbot," said Sir Laurence, "and therefore I would propose that an additional verse be added to the church litany to defend us from either."

"It would be perfectly needless on your own account, Sir Laurence," cried the incorrigible Mrs. Bloomfield, "genius and talent will never assail the head of the Loungers, whilst you are their representative."

"You have got your answer, Baronet," rejoined Lillyman exultingly. "For my part, far from thinking genius and talent

evils, I pray unceasingly that they may be showered down upon me."

"Nay, then," replied the widow, "we must cease to wonder that you should be so bountifully endowed. I now reflect without surprise at the conversation after yesterday's dinner; for surely it was *genius* unequalled that led to the discussion upon made dishes; and *talent* unparalleled that constituted you so decided a judge of the fit and the proper in cooking a veal sweet-bread.

The Baronet in his turn enjoyed the attack upon Lillyman; and a drizzling shower confining them to the house, the company separated; some to enjoy the delight of cards, and others the more rational pursuit of music.

Several days passed without much variety, if we except the various modes of teazing employed by the widow against those she *knew* to be vulnerable, and consequently *thought* fair game. Meantime a letter from Lady Ann gave rather a satisfactory account of the fractured limb; but spoke of the patient's general health in unfavourable terms,

"To leave him till some alteration takes place," she added, "would be the height of cruelty, more especially since he flatters me not only with the title of chief nurse, but Physician extraordinary; and declares the sight of me is more reviving than medicine."

During the month which had now elapsed since Fanny's arrival, Leslie's admiration had increased to a pitch of enthusiasm. In studying minutely her character, he found her in person, mind, and manners, the being whom he would have selected as the partner of his heart—the companion of his choice—and to whom he was destined to owe complete happiness, or substantial misery. Of Captain Corbett he would have had no fears—judging from Fanny's general conduct—had not that gentleman taken every opportunity which chance gave him of privately conferring with Leslie, to hint in pretty broad terms the encouragement our heroine had given him when in town; and the very flattering manner in which his proposals had been received by Lady Ann and Mr. Strictland. "I dare say," he added,

"our family party have little suspicion of the mutual attachment I thus frankly avow; an attachment my lovely Fanny, from the purest motives of female delicacy, begs I will not by particular attention discover; but on the contrary, hide it by affected indifference."

"Miss Fitz-York," replied Leslie, "succeeds in her own plans admirably. I think I never saw indifference more completely personified; and your word alone, which I dare not doubt, could convince me that it was merely exterior; I should be almost afraid of marrying a woman so entirely mistress of art and hypocrisy; and peculiarly offensive in one, who, in every other instance, appears the soul of truth and candour."

This conversation was part of a plot hatched in the fertile and mischievous brains of Corbett and Philippa. Leslie, who took no pains to hide the impression Fanny had made on his hitherto insensible heart, seized every opportunity to ingratiate himself; and by assiduity, and the most sedulous attention, to gain those affections for which he

would freely have forfeited wealth, power, and dignity; and which he could not persuade himself were the exclusive property of so trifling a being as Corbett.

Philippa viewed this new-raised flame with an eye of jealous malignity; and fancied she could have borne a rival in any other person with less reluctance, than in the insignificant being who from fortune had so few pretensions to the heir of a Dukedom.

Such were the reflexions of an envious woman. When in fact any other female, to whom Leslie paid the same court, would have been seen with equal repugnance; and had fortune offered no barrier, there would have arisen others, either in person, mind, or connexions, of perhaps greater import.

Fanny was too sincere—too unartificial a character to disguise the pleasure she felt in Leslie's unwearied assiduity. Their sentiments upon every subject were congenial, and their pleasures took their rise from the same source. Music was the delight of each, and cards their aversion. Fanny, from her

country education, was an expert horse-woman, and a no less persevering pedestrian; she had not forgot her skill at shuttlecock; and though now too old for a skipping rope, or the manual exercise, they had each in turn conduced to give ease and grace to her actions, which dancing, as she grew older, had confirmed; and at seventeen our heroine was a model of unaffected ease and elegance. The French and Italian languages were nearly as familiar as her mother tongue. In drawing she was no mean proficient, though that was a science for which she had less genius than any other. But perseverance, which never fails to reward her votaries, made ample amends for the want of original talent; and produced sketches from nature that some artists would not have disdained to acknowledge. In all these pleasing amusements she was ably seconded by Leslie; whose immediate connexions beheld the growing attachment with delight, and anticipated the final event with pride and pleasure.

"Similar minds naturally unite," was

an observation made by her Grace on a former occasion, and we beg leave to repeat it. Leslie Talbot and Fanny Fitz-York were not a stronger case in point, than Captain Corbett and Philippa Heathcote; who with equal pain observed the good understanding which subsisted, and threatened to overthrow the long-cherished hopes of the latter; whilst the former, without any settled plan of action, except the vanity inherent in his nature of being admired; felt equal exacerbation at the harmony, and constant good humour with which Fanny received and repaid Leslie's endeavours to make himself useful and agreeable.

Opportunities are seldom wanting for the furtherance of mischief. One soon occurred wherein Corbett and Philippa digested the probable means of effecting a breach between the envied pair. The foregoing dialogue was the foundation of their designs, and the hated disclosure left upon Leslie's sincere and ardent mind, an impression painfully acute, since it painted the object of his worship as

not only *capable* of hypocrisy but a complete *mistress* of it.

The evening repast which succeeded Corbett's disclosure, was the first unpleasant meal Leslie had attended since Fanny's arrival. Instead of his usual flow of attentive pleasantry, he was silent and abstracted; scarcely noticing her Grace's anxiety, and refusing all Philippa's assiduous offers to supply him with those delicacies she strongly recommended to tempt his appetite. Even our heroine's enquiries were answered with a formal "Yes, madam," or, "No, madam."

The foregoing manner, more than the ceremonious appellation, shocked and surprized his fair neighbour. Her blue eyes dazzling with native brightness, were turned full upon him, as if seeking for an explanation of behaviour so new and accountable; but his sunk under her penetrating glance; and making what was palpably an effort to hide his uneasiness, he addressed some trifling question to Miss Auburn, who sat vis-a-vis; then, without waiting for, or seeming to expect an answer, leaned upon his hand, and

so continued during the remainder of the repast.

Mrs. Bloomfield's surprise at a caprice from which she thought Leslie exempt, would probably have expired in silent wonder had it not extended to her favourite; but any deviation from the strictest propriety towards her, was not to be endured. Taking advantage of the servants' withdrawing she bawled in his ear, "Pray Mr. Talbot are you often troubled with fits?"

"Fits, madam!"

"Yes! Of whim, or caprice, or ill breeding?"

"Never, I hope."

"Then, what in the name of common sense ails you? You say you are well—we know you are sober—yet you scarcely notice the kind enquiries of her Grace.—Miss Heathcote, who has coaxed your appetite as though you were a spoiled child, or a *favorite Lover*, has been unsuccessful in tempting you to eat—Miss Fitz-York is congealed by the freezing respectfulness of your manner—and I am dying with curiosity to know how

it began, or where it will end. If neither her Grace, Miss Heathcote, or my fair friend have given you offence, and from their present ill requited attention I think that impossible; then, I say, your conduct is not to be defended upon principles of politeness or decorum.

"Trifling characters, both male and female," glancing her eye across the table, "are governed by caprice; but a youth of your extraordinary qualities should soar aloof, and not descend to the petty arts practised by ignorance and folly, to raise compassion, or create astonishment."

Leslie having listened with much deference to this harangue, replied, "My dear madam, I would kiss the rod if I thought its application properly applied; but in the present instance I am corrected for no fault, if you confine my transgression to caprice. That never was, nor I trust ever will form a part of my character. The conduct you blame has its rise in a trifling uneasiness which I trust to-morrow will dissipate, or at least so far conquer as not to annoy my friends.

"For any undesigned offence I may have given her Grace, Miss Fitz-York, or Philippa, I respectfully intreat their forgiveness; and that I may not incur further censure, will say good night to all."

CHAP. IX.

A PROPOSAL OF MARRIAGE—A MORTIFYING DISCOVERY—AND MUCH PERSECUTION.

ON the morrow, Philippa and her coadjutor congratulated each other upon their success with the credulous Leslie; and had no doubt their machinations would finally separate the lovers, provided they could prevent an ecclaircissement. For this purpose, the female Machiavel proposed to drop a letter in Leslie's way as the production of Mr. Strictland, speaking unequivocally of Corbett's pretensions, and the marriage with Fanny as a decided thing. "Leslie has too much honour, as well as pride," added she, "to persevere in a hopeless pursuit, and Fanny too much delicacy to seek a man who evidently shuns her. But why, Captain, not seek Miss Fitz-York for a wife yourself? You say pique and resentment actuate you,

though you never made serious proposals; what, in the name of heaven, then, was your intent? You would not be mad enough, surely, to seek an illicit connexion with a person of her family and respectability. Her pretensions to wealth are limited, certainly, and yet not beneath the acceptance of a soldier of fortune; therefore, take my advice—strike a bold stroke—declare yourself an honourable lover, and my life upon your success."

Corbett, who really liked Fanny as much as so selfish a being could love any thing—except himself; and whose five hundred a year would be no despicable acquisition; wondered, for the first time, what there could be in matrimony so dreadful that he had shunned it even in thought! He now fancied a thousand advantages would arise from the connexion—advantages powerful in point of emolument, besides the glory of carrying off a prize, so many had vainly sighed for.

Brimful of what he called love, and certain of success, when Fanny became fully ac-

quainted with his serious intentions, he wrote by that day's post to her lady mother; taking especial care that Leslie should see the direction, and by that means put an end to his doubts, if he before entertained any.

Young Talbot, to avoid taking his usual seat by Fanny—until he had in some degree conquered the acuteness of his feelings—pretended a dinner engagement, and was not again visible that day. But the following morning he appeared calm and composed, in no respect differing from his former self, except that now his attention was general, when formerly it had been exclusively confined to our heroine. Fanny could not but wonder at this change of behaviour, since she had given no cause for it; but consoled herself with the idea that Leslie's prior attentions were bestowed upon her as a *stranger*, and that no longer coming under that description, she of course had no claims, except in common with Miss Auburn, Philippa, and his cousins.

It is true, his dereliction was a drawback upon her happiness; but she determined to

consider past enjoyment as a pleasant dream, from which she now awoke filled with regret that it was so short and evanescent.

Lady Milford, who looked forward with pride to a period not very distant when her niece would rank above the envious Lady Mountcastle, was little less hurt than Fanny; and would have questioned Leslie respecting his conduct and his motives, had not our heroine been decidedly averse, as giving a consequence to the affair it by no means merited. "I have as little right," she added, "to complain of slight *now*, as I had to be elated at his former *distinction*; the one arose from compassion to my youth and inexperience, the other is the result of caprice; and to neither would I be indebted for attentions I do not otherwise deserve. We have no right, my dear madam, to question the motives of Mr. Talbot's conduct, till we are injured or offended by them; and, as I feel myself superior to either, you will oblige your grateful Frances by passing the matter over as a thing of

course, and not worthy of your attention or my own."

A deviation from the strict and immutable laws of truth can in no instance be defended; nor do we presume to uphold our favourite in the deception her last speech elicited, otherwise than by saying, that when she declared herself unhurt, and not offended by Leslie's conduct, it was one of those little temporizing fallacies which creep into conversation without the consciousness of the speaker, and may rather be termed aberrations from truth, or a slight degree of simulation, than direct falsehood. If my fair readers are not satisfied with this apology, I hope they will undertake her defence themselves; and, by way of bringing the matter to a point, reflect for a moment how they have been hurt at the slight of a favourite—for the truth will out—Leslie was a prodigious favourite of Fanny's—and whether they have not on such occasions condescended to prevaricate and err from the exact truth, rather than own themselves offended? If any of my young friends can answer this

in the negative, I confess Fanny culpable; if not, she will be pardoned, and reinstated in their favour.

Corbett, finding Fanny proof against all his attempts to procure an interview, wrote a letter, wherein he offered himself to her acceptance in the most unequivocal and respectful terms. But to his surprise and utter confusion, his own note was returned in an envelope without answer. Whether anger, disappointment, or mortified pride, was the predominant feeling, we are at a loss to decide, otherwise than by their effects. Anger produced oaths and execrations—disappointment caused reflections on the loss of five hundred a year — and mortified pride wounded his self-love, perhaps the most vulnerable point about him. To confess his defeat, even to his friend and adviser, was a humiliation not to be endured; but there is no evil without a counteracting good—no poison without an antidote—so Fanny's envelope, though it starved his hopes, fed his revenge.

Saturated with the latter passion, he

joined Leslie in the garden, and asked if he was for the Newmarket meeting? "I have just received a letter," he added, "with a pressing invitation to meet some friends, and shall go with pleasure if you are of the party." So saying, he pulled a paper from his pocket, and presenting it to young Talbot, stooped to gather some mignionette. Leslie started when the direction met his view, for it was in the well-known hand of Fanny. His first impulse was to make himself master of the contents; but honour, the governing principle of his mind, overruled it; "besides," he reflected, "how can a correspondence between Miss Fitz-York and Captain Corbett interest me?" Corbett at this moment overtook him, when, with a smile which betrayed more of misery than mirth, he held out the fatal envelope; and, sighing as he spoke, said, "I fancy this was not intended for my perusal. A lady's correspondence is a sacred pledge, and not to be profaned by vulgar eyes."

Corbett affected much surprise at his mistake, and blaming the heedlessness which pro-

duced it, drew forth the real letter; and rapturously kissing the direction, returned Fanny's envelope to his pocket. The end for which he joined Leslie was answered; and without feeling the smallest regret when he declined the Newmarket expedition, which himself had no intention to pursue, he left the lovelorn heir of Newland to brood over lost happiness, and to regret that Fanny Fitz-York, the child of nature—the offspring of sense and sensibility—the heiress of every virtue under heaven—was the destined wife of a *coxcomb*.

Time moved, yet the views of Philippa and Corbett remained stationary. Vain were the lady's efforts, and no art was left untried to subdue Leslie. The consideration with which he had aforetime treated her, seemed by him to be no longer remembered; or if remembered, it was only to draw comparisons between his past happiness and present misery; between the thoughtless ease of *former* days, when every female shared his attention, and the heart-rending *now*, when to one alone he was devoted; without

the faintest hope, the most distant chance, of beholding her, after the present visit, but as the partner of a man who could not appreciate her extrinsic value, owing to the weakness of his intellect; nor pay homage to her intrinsic loveliness, because his own person was the god of his idolatry; and to bow before any other altar, heresy and schism against the divinity of *self*.

In less than a week Corbett received an answer from Lady Ann, the outside of which was triumphantly shewn to Leslie, neither encouraging or otherwise, since it left her daughter free to choose, and at liberty to reject. The same post brought one to Fanny, fraught with much good advice; and an assurance that the man of her choice since—well convinced she would decide with judgment—should be the object, next herself, of maternal care and solicitude. Of Mr. O'Brian's recovery she spoke despairingly, and thought a short time would decide his fate; when Mr. Strictland promised to attend her first summons as an

escort to Tremorne, and likewise to deliver Fanny safe into the arms of her mother.

Whilst these occurrences were passing, Leslie and Fanny avoided each other as seduously as though a compact had been signed for that puspose. His former situation at the dining-table was occupied by a young artist, who on the day of his arrival, Mrs. Bloomfield invited to take the chair between herself and Fanny, since it was plain Leslie only retained it because he was at a loss for a motive to do otherwise.

The first view of a stranger in a seat he had filled with so much delight to himself, and apparent satisfaction to his fair neighbour, caused a pang, and sent the blood with rushing violence into his face. He started, as if the spectre of departed happiness stood before him, and seemed for a moment irresolute whether to assert his claim, or prudently relinquish a vicinity so dangerous to his peace. With a sigh as he passed Fanny's chair, he took a seat next the Duke; and, as if he feared to trust his own thoughts, began a conversation with the artist upon

the subject proper for the grand altar-piece in the chapel.

This served for discourse during dinner; and as soon afterwards as politeness would permit, Leslie retired with the painter, under pretence of shewing him a view which might be taken with effect. Fanny sighed as they left the room, because the time had been— alas! how lately! when her company would have been desired, nay, indispensable. This very landscape, she and Leslie had admired and sketched together; on this very spot, his eyes had spoken a language too well understood by her's; a language she must now forget, or forfeit her peace of mind for ever! This reflection tended so much to unhinge her, that when the ladies retired, she sought relief in the solitude of the conservatory; and, whilst she fancied herself drawn thither by her taste for botany, was, in fact, indulging meditations corroding to her peace; for this place was the favourite haunt of Leslie, and most of the choice exotics of his collecting.

As she stooped over a plant he had taken

particular pains to describe in their days of unreserved communication, she heard the footsteps of a man approaching; and fearful of being caught by Leslie in a place known to be his favourite retreat, she quickly passed on to the opposite door; when Corbett, for he was the intruder, joined her at the moment young Talbot entered from the garden. Confusion was not more visible on the countenance of our heroine than exultation on that of the Captain. Leslie started back, as if some noxious animal had met his vision; but quickly recovering himself, he begged pardon for intruding on their privacy, and with a passing bow retired.

Our heroine's vexation at being thus caught, was, if possible, exceeded by resentment against Corbett as the author of her mortification. Leslie's words plainly proved the construction he put upon this accidental meeting; her manifest confusion would help to corroborate it; and his sudden retreat had prevented an avowal of the truth.

Corbett, with self-gratulation, beheld the present moment as the crisis of his fate;

since accident had done more for him than all the studied impositions practised upon his rival. He regarded Fanny's down-cast looks, as the serpent is said to have viewed our first mother, namely, with the triumph of a conqueror, and the malice of a fiend; for that he should now overcome her scruples he felt assured; and in gaining her for a wife, revenge, that she had not been as yielding as her compeers, actuated him even more than policy; love—dignified, pure, almighty love—had no share in the composition of Corbett.

The silence which succeeded Leslie's departure was interrupted by the Captain, who, gently seizing her hand, and pressing it to his bosom, hoped the present discovery would hasten his happiness, and enable him to present her to the world as his adored, angelic partner.

This avowal of his sentiments, and the action which preceded it, rouzed Fanny from the thoughtful reverie into which she was sinking, regardless of his presence. Snatching away her hand, and resuming that

dignity of deportment which characterised the females of her family, she asked him upon what premises he presumed to ground his pretensions? "I have never concealed my disapprobation of your pretended pas-passion———"

"Pretended, Madam!"

"On the contrary, it has been avowed so clearly both by my words and behaviour, that no man who possessed the smallest discernment could have been deceived. *You* are not deceived, Captain Corbett, nor can you deceive *me*. Though young, I am endowed with penetration sufficient to discover, that vanity and self-love are the governing passions of your mind; and that a wish to be called a general favourite—a man for whom the sex would pull caps—is the sum total of your desires. With me you can never be a favourite; and the greatest uneasiness I have ever known, has arisen from what you are pleased to call attention; but which I construe into insult."

"Insult! By heaven the person lives not, except yourself, who durst thus accuse me."

"If accident brought you to this place—at this hour—I have no right to condemn you; but if it was by design you intruded on my privacy, I beg—nay, *I insist*—that you never repeat the presumption."

"I crave your pardon, madam, for arriving so *mal-apropos*. Had I suspected, what now appears too plain, that Leslie came here by appointment———"

"You cannot—dare not suspect it. Mr. Talbot's coming was accidental,—I wish I could think your's so."

"Suppose it otherwise, and that I came purposely to deprecate the frowns of beauty, where is the mighty crime? 'Aye, there's the rub!' The crime lies not in the offence, but in the person offending. Leslie would have been pardoned for breaking in upon your privacy, though his best affections are devoted to Philippa; whilst I, cherishing no image but your own, am doomed to meet only scorn and contempt."

"Your insinuations are beneath my notice, and are as unfounded as they are base. If Miss Heathcote possesses Mr. Talbot's af-

fections, I am sure he will never wrong her by duplicity of conduct; nor *build* his own character on the *ruins* of the *man* he calls *friend*."

Fanny repeated the last words with strong emphasis, and was hurrying away, when Philippa entered the conservatory, saying, "Come, good folks, will your *tête-à-tête* never have an end? Leslie, from whom I just parted, told me where I should find you, and, contrary to his express desire, for he experimentally knows how delightful are the hours passed in love and confidence, I venture to remind you that her Grace's tea is served. Miss Fitz-York, I hope you have not treated the prettiest fellow in England with cruelty? *He* looks glum, and *you* serious; but you know the old song, 'The quarrels of lovers, ods me, they're a jest,' and, believe me, there is a great deal of truth in that line. When I and my spark tiff, we know very well that we shall soon make it up again, and the reconciliation seems so delightful! But come, her Grace will be impatient. I won't tell tales out of school; I

have forced myself into your confidence, but scorn to betray it; and I hope you will be equally cautious, lest you give the old cat—— I beg your pardon, Fitz——Mrs. Bloomfield I mean,—a theme on which to exercise her satire. Lilly and the Baronet she has almost exhausted; but you are both too wise and too good to call forth her ill-nature, unless it be your own faults, as in the present instance."

A servant now came to announce tea; and Fanny was by no means sorry that the voluble girl's rhapsody was interrupted. For Philippa was not a character in whom she could repose confidence; some answer would have been expected; and a simple denial of what she seemed resolved to believe, would only have laid her open to the teasing loquacity she determined to discourage.

Mrs. Bloomfield, though a sincere friend, and, in many respects, a valuable woman, was not a character to whom Fanny could unfold her uneasiness. She possessed not those tender feelings which compassionate

little troubles and *slight* perplexities; and any thing Fanny could have confessed, respecting Corbett, would have appeared, to her capacious mind, as trifling and unimportant—as a business, in short, which it required only common firmness to terminate. The grand source of her uneasiness, namely, Leslie's unaccountable behaviour, as far as related to his general conduct, the widow had already pretty freely discussed; but of Fanny's cause for sorrow, individually, she was no fit *confidante*, since love, and all its delicate involvements, were to her rather subjects of merriment, than worthy of serious attention.

To Lady Milford, then, she determined to refer Corbett's insolence, fully persuaded that no interference less powerful could cope with his persevering, and highly offensive offers.

After tea, the Duchess proposed music, as a means of harmonizing the chagrin and uneasiness too visible upon the countenances of some of her younger inmates; but no one seconded the motion. Fanny and Leslie,

who would heretofore have flown to obey the summons, kept their seats, as uninterested in the proposal, or unconscious that it had been made. A silence ensued, each looking at the other, as if enquiring the cause; when Lady Milford, turning to Fanny, said, "My dear, you surely did not hear the Duchess?"

"I beg pardon," replied our heroine, "for my inattention. Did your Grace address any thing to me?"

"Not individually, my love," observed the Duchess. "But a hint would heretofore have taken you to the music-room, and now a specific proposal is received in silence. Whence this sudden change?"

"I feel no change," answered Fanny, "in my respect for your Grace; nor in my desire to conform to the slightest of your wishes."

"My only wish," said the Duchess, in reply, "is to see you all happy. Music used to be the never-failing medium, and I should be sorry to think its power lessened."

Fanny, taking the arm of Sidney, led the

way; and placing her ladyship at the piano, drew forth her harp, and played a beautiful accompaniment to those elegant words in Burgoyne's comedy of the Heiress, "For tenderness formed;" to which the tone of her mind gave a pathos—an expression never surpassed by the fascinating Crouch. Leslie had refused his violin; but on a repetition of the air, particularly desired by the Duke, he crept softly behind Fanny's chair, and produced sounds, which made her start, and turn her head to identify the musician. His former refusal had not escaped her notice.

Their eyes met—a glow tinged the cheeks of each—but it was of momentary duration. Fanny's thoughts reverted to the happy, the distinguished Philippa; and as she proceeded, the words were so applicable to her infantile and present feelings, that a tear started to her eye, and, defying all her efforts to disperse it, fell upon the music-book. Leslie, when discovered, had advanced upon a line with the fair minstrel; he saw her agitation—observed the sparkling drop, sacred

to sensibility—brushed it off with his handkerchief—and placed that in his bosom.

Fanny concluded amid the rapturous applauses of the company, and Leslie was presenting his hand to lead her to a seat, when Corbett briskly stepping forward with the same intent, the former sighed, and bowing retired; whilst our heroine, with a look of superiority, mingled with contempt, walked proudly past the Captain and seated herself by Lady Milford.

Leslie, who pretended to be looking at the music book Philippa was industriously turning over, saw Fanny's refusal of Corbett's hand, and the forbidding look which accompanied it, with undissembled pleasure; and was mentally saying "Perhaps I am deceived;" when Philippa whispered in his ear, "what a little coquette it is!" Recalled by these words to a full sense of the avowed indifference with which they had agreed to treat each other before witnesses, he attributed her disdainful deportment to anger at Corbett's outstepping those bounds; and more than ever wondered that duplicity

should gain residence in a bosom, where truth and innocence seemed to have taken up their abode.

Fanny found no opportunity that night of speaking confidentially to Lady Milford; and before the family were assembled to breakfast, a summons arrived for her Ladyship's immediate departure. Lord Milford had been attacked with his annual fit of the gout, and so irascible were his feelings, on this and similar occasions, that however the Countess might be engaged, or at whatever distance, a courier was dispatched to recal her; though when she arrived, he seldom condescended to see her, much less would he accept of her services. The Earl was one of those peevish beings, and many such there are in the world—who cannot bear to see others happy, whilst they are the reverse. He was now groaning with pain, and the idea of his Lady enjoying ease and content, was a crime against the majesty of self, which no forbearance he was master of could for a moment reconcile. Accordingly a messenger was sent off with the unwelcome mandate that tore

her from the house of hospitality, and left her friends to regret the loss of her society.

Thus foiled in her wish to seek relief from Lady Milford, Fanny was left to ask counsel of her own heart, and to depend upon her own judgment to repel the presuming advances of Corbett. Nor was she the only person whom her Ladyship's departure filled with regret. Leslie, trusting to appearances against the evidence of Corbett, sometimes fancied, or at least wished to fancy, that Fanny's engagement was not so clearly ascertained, or fully acknowledged as to forbid all chance of rivalship. The Countess, he had no doubt, could, and would satisfy him on these points; and he had wrought up his mind to the momentous enquiry, when her Ladyship's departure defeated all his plans. 'Tis true Mrs. Bloomfield was Miss Fitz-York's staunch friend and advocate; but whether she was admitted into all her secrets, or if she were, whether she would divulge them, seemed a point much more doubtful than in the case of Lady

Milford; who had often hinted her wishes of an alliance between the families; and latterly, seemed more than commonly hurt at the estrangement which had taken place.

After breakfast the company as usual separated; and finding the room deserted by all except the widow and himself, he expressed his sorrow at Lady Milford's departure, and then turned the conversation to other subjects. At length, mention being made of Corbett, he observed, "I fancy the Captain will soon be married."

"Perhaps so." A pause of some moments.

"Captain Corbett is a general favourite with the ladies."

"I don't know." Still there was no encouragement to proceed.

"Is Miss Fitz-York likely to be married soon?"

"You had better ask her. But pray what have Captain Corbett and Miss Fitz-York to do in common?"

"I beg your pardon, I would not be impertinently inquisitive, but I thought——"

"That Miss Fitz-York was a fool?"

"Quite the contrary. But surely without any impeachment of the understanding, Captain Corbett might pretend——"

"To what?"

"To a lady's favour."

"I grant it. But Miss Fitz-York is not to be classed with ladies in general. She has discernment above her years, and an understanding which enables her to distinguish a man of sense from a fool. You from Corbett for instance."

"You do me honour; but without reflecting that women of the strongest minds are sometimes captivated by their opposites; and that taste is frequently independent of judgment."

"I grant, in some cases it is not only independent, but runs a course directly contrary; hence we are led to think the same person possesses two judgments; one sound and healthy, the other rickety, puny, and sickly; else so many ill-assorted matches would not present themselves, nor men and women of sense, be yoke-fellows with imbecility and

deformity of mind. But in these ill-constructed marriages, you may always trace a something of lurking weakness in the sensible party, which does not appear to the general view; but may be discovered by a nice observer in many of their actions besides marriage. Fanny Fitz-York, or I am much deceived, has nothing of this latent feebleness about her; she will chuse with judgment, and how would that be shewn by preferring such a *thing* as Corbett?

"He is very handsome."

"Do handsome men make attentive husbands? rational companions? Instructive guides? On the contrary, is not their comeliness a quicksand, in which virtue, honour, and happiness are engulphed? And what remains to the poor, deluded admirer of beauty, but mortification and repentance?

"Then you really think Miss Fitz-York has no positive engagement with Captain Corbett?"

"To suppose she has *any*, without speaking of a *positive* one, would be an impeachment of her understanding, and degrade

her more, much more, in my opinion, than any probable occurrence of her life ever will do."

Mrs. Bloomfield was now summoned to her Grace's dressing room; and Leslie with a heart lightened of half its load, was meditating on the perfections of Fanny, and the probability there yet existed of calling such perfection his own, when she entered the room in search of Mrs. Bloomfield. Not seeing her, she was retiring, when Leslie, in accents the most gentle, hoped the sight of him did not hasten her away.

"No, Sir. I came in search of my friend, Mrs. Bloomfield, but she having vanished, I cannot under any possible pretence intrude upon you."

"The time has been, when Miss Fitz-York would have addressed me with less ceremony."

"You are right, Sir. The time has been when you set me the *example*; and now I am only following *your lead*."

"But if I am permitted to return to hours

of confidence and friendship; can you—will you admit me to our former intimacy?"

Fanny felt humbled by the request. She had too much proper pride to be the slave of any man's caprice; and what but caprice had governed his former neglect, or present hopes of favour?

Assuming as much dignity as her slight figure would allow; and with a seriousness of aspect foreign to her usual character, she replied, "No, Sir! The link is severed which united us in confidence and friendship—severed by an act of your own free-will, to which I was no more accessary than I will be to its reunion. For how could I be assured that your instability would not subject me again to mortification, and the wondering animadversions of our society? Once I have borne both of these, but it shall be my own fault if they are renewed." She then hastily retired to her own room, lest the tears fast rising to her eyes should discover weakness, or their suppression increase the throbbing of her heart to agony.

Leslie's ruminations after her departure

were of a mixed nature, pleasant and painful; for had not Mrs. Bloomfield said no engagement subsisted between her and Corbett? and yet could a female of delicacy correspond with a young—a fascinating—a vain man, under circumstances less binding? And under what other pretence could Corbett write to and receiving letters from Lady Ann? These were staggering facts, corroborated by the Captain's own confession; against which he had Mrs. Bloomfield's assurance, and Fanny's general conduct; but might not the widow be deceived by the same arts which imposed upon others? She only spoke in general terms; and these were too vague to substantiate the non-engagement, or to confirm the indifference of our heroine.

These meditations were interupted by Philippa who seeing Fanny at the window of her own apartment, beckoned to Leslie to join her in the garden. This invitation he could not with politeness refuse; and sliding her arm within his, they promenaded within sight of the house. Fanny had retired from the window on the first view of a junction so

wounding to her feelings, nor again appeared in view, though she was an unseen observer of their motions.

Philippa's sole aim at present being to alienate the hearts of Leslie and Fanny, she rather strove to depreciate her rival, than to recommend herself. For this purpose, she painted the scene in the Conservatory, in which according to her own tale our heroine appeared in a ludicrous point of view—a mixture of prude and coquette—one moment owning Corbett's power, the next denying it. "From which I plainly see," she added, "that if a better match offers, the poor Captain may seek the Willow shade, unless he resolve to conquer an attachment, from which he can promise himself no solid happiness." Leslie made no reply; on which Philippa continued, "I attribute the poor thing's childish conduct to her strange education, rather than to any natural defect of temper, or morals. Secluded from society, and totally unacquainted with its usages, no wonder the first pretty fellow who whispers the tale of love should be successful; though, if

I mistake not she would gladly recall her vows, to catch a title more imposing than that of Captain's Lady."

Philippa, like many others in their attempts to kill character, overshot her mark. Leslie had studied Fanny too closely, to be all at once warped in his opinion by the report of others; particularly one who had latterly betrayed an envious jealousy of attainments surpassing her own. Far from thinking her ruined by seclusion, and a private education; he attributed many of her virtues, and the excess of her accomplishments to that source; and was too well assured of her sound judgment, and excellent understanding, to allow for a moment that she could be the unstable, fluctuating trifler Philippa had painted. An earnest desire to do justice, even to an enemy, and to support the reputation of a slandered absentee, though an object of indifference, were amiable traits in the character of Leslie. Could he then hear the female whose unrivalled excellence, both of person and mind, made every other woman sink in the comparison, aspersed, without attempting her vindication? Impossible! Turning, there-

fore with a look of severity to Philippa, he replied, "I have attended, Miss Heathcote, to your ill-natured and unfounded slander—for slander I must call any attempt to depreciate the character of an absent person; and cannot resist the justice which demands a refutation.

"Miss Fitz-York, in my opinion, is not only in appearance, but *really* one of the most perfect of nature's works. Faultless in person—unsullied in mind—superior in understanding—and unrivalled in accomplishments; the childish instability you attribute to her, would be as unnatural an incongruity, as the expectation of extracting dross from pure gold, or mud from clear, unadulterated water. If Miss Fitz-York be attached to Captain Corbett, of which I have my doubts, 'tis an attachment on principle; for no light caprice will ever govern such a mind; and, therefore, it cannot be subject to the arts of coquetry, or the prude's more dangerous wiles. I know not, Philippa, why you have taken so much pains to impose upon me; but whatever was your motive, it will

be mortification enough to know, that your efforts have had an effect directly contrary; and if Corbett was your adviser, he had best beware how he perseveres in a conduct, which will in the end cover him with shame.

Philippa, exasperated beyond all former bounds by Leslie's severe reproof, and the haughty manner in which he left her, sought her adviser; when they agreed, after considering the matter pro and con; that as Talbot was proof against their arts, they would turn them more decidedly against Fanny; whose pride, which these confederates denominated excessive; would aid their plans of separation as effectually, and with less danger to themselves.

Leslie found himself so much softened towards Fanny by Mrs. Bloomfield's discourse, added to the interest which arose from defending her; that he was in the dining parlour before any of the party, resolved to claim his former seat, and maintain it against all opposition. As the widow advanced, he bowed, and smiling begged leave to resume his envied station. "I have no legal right,"

she replied "to assent or refuse, but will for once usurp one, and say you are welcome." Fanny did not enter the room until they had all taken their places, and started on beholding young Talbot seated by her friend, and talking with unusual animation.

"This," she mentally exclaimed, "is a continuation of his morning's presumption, which I should deserve, were I to countenance." Then advancing towards Philippa, she said "will you Miss Heathcote have any material objection to exchange seats? a teazing head ache makes me dread facing the light, which probably you can encounter without inconveniance.

"Certainly," replied Philippa, "any thing to accommodate the *peerless Frances*," glancing spitefully at Leslie. "But bless me, child," she added, "your eyes are red and swelled, had you not better take dinner in your own apartment?" Nothing could have been less desired than this observation. Fanny hoped by avoiding the light, to conceal the too visible trace of tears—tears which she could not rationally account for. But now,

all eyes were turned upon her, and every tongue engaged in multiplying questions and advice. All tongues did I say? no, not all! Leslie opened not his lips: but anxiety and solicitude were painted on his countenance; and he inwardly pondered on the cause that could draw tears from her, who in the world's estimation, had so much reason to be happy. Had he any share in the grief? was the question uppermost in his thoughts. The idea that he had gained an interest in her fair bosom, next occurred, and the possibility was hailed with rapture.

Fanny, to confirm her assurance that all was well except a slight head-ache, endeavoured to eat and talk cheerfully, but every attempt to swallow, was attended with loathing, and her spirits were unequal to conversation. The company in general had too much politeness to notice either her want of appetite, or the invincible dejection of her manner; but Philippa, who delighted to teaze and mortify one whose superiority she was forced to acknowledge annoyed her by vulgar astonishment at the why, and the

wherefore; and ill-repressed triumph, when she found her questions productive of embarrassment, or too perplexing to admit of a direct answer.

For some time Mrs. Bloomfield heard and saw with silent attention. But when Philippa recommended a sprig of *hearts ease*, with which the jelly was ornamented, as a specific for swelled eyes, and loss of appetite, the widow, with much asperity of manner, said "Miss Heathcote, you have amused yourself during dinner, with questions, inuendos, and remarks, applied directly, or indirectly, to my young friend; as a new method, I suppose, of alleviating her indisposition; for I should be very sorry to think you had any wish to increase it. The *hearts ease* you took such pains to recommend, Miss Fitz-York is amply supplied with, by conscious rectitude of conduct, and firm integrity of soul. I therefore beg leave to compliment *you* with it, as the sovereign remedy in all cases of envy, ill nature, and jealousy. If any of your friends are tormented with these maladies, tell them the wonderful virtues of

hearts-ease will temper their acerbity, and finally eradicate them from the human mind."

A dead silence followed this remark. Those who thought Philippa injured by it, were too powerless to take her part against so strong an adversary; and their Graces were not sorry such a check had been given to her ill-timed flippancy. Fanny, from whom she deserved no pity, was hurt at the widow's severity; and, with the smile of a seraph, said, "Miss Heathcote's well-meant endeavour to rouse my supineness, would, doubtless, have had the desired effect in a case merely mental; but bodily pain will not fly before raillery; and this little flower—her present—shall be preserved as a shield to counteract any attempt to dispossess my *heart* of that *ease* it now values itself upon." Leslie involuntarily bowed his head, in token of approbation. The Duke, whose neighbour she was, pressed her hand to his lips—whilst the Duchess, with an approving smile, exclaimed, "Such sweetness of disposition is the best security that I am acquaint-

ed with for hearts-ease; and yet, that will not always insure it. But though, as frail mortals, we cannot *command* success, there is great consolation in knowing we *deserve* it; and that consolation, I foresee, will never abandon Miss Fitz-York." Her Grace then recommended a stroll, in preference to the music-room; "because," she added, "if our lovely friend be caught within the precincts of the latter, we shall indubitably trespass upon her talents, and singing is a bad panacea for the head-ache."

Fanny seized Mrs. Bloomfield's arm, and requesting to walk under her protection, they took a path seldom frequented by the family. They had not proceeded far, when Leslie, with folded arms, slowly approached from a side avenue; and hoping Miss Fitz-York had received benefit from the air, would have passed on, had not the widow, in her accustomed unceremonious manner, bawled out, "Pray, Mr. Talbot, have you ever asked Miss Fitz-York the important question you put to me?"

"Madam!"

"You recollect I referred you to her as the most proper person to ascertain the fact you seemed so anxious about."

"I remember asking a question in the course of common conversation; which had I proposed to Miss Fitz-York, would have been both rude and impertinent."

"If the question to myself would have been *rude*," said Fanny, with spirit, "some degree of *impertinence* must attach, when proposed to a third person."

"Oh no, my dear," replied the widow. "There is a wonderful difference between speaking *of* and *to* a person. For instance, Mr. Talbot might ask me, if I did not think you extremely plain and ill-tempered; but had he proposed the same quere to yourself, he would have been hooted by all the votaries of politeness, from my Lord Chesterfield to our clerical Adonis, the white-handed, taper-fingered Lillyman. But this is playing about the bush. Pray, my dear, are you going to be married?"

"Me, Madam!"

"Yes, you, child. I do not ask for my

own information, but for the edification of this modest gentleman."

"My decision cannot be of the smallest importance to Mr. Talbot."

"Yes, it is; for he intends, I believe, to offer himself to Captain Corbett as groom's-man on the occasion."

"On what occasion?"

"Bless me! How dull you are. On the occasion of your marriage with Captain Corbett, to be sure."

"Has Captain Corbett dared to insinuate?" said Fanny, warmly. "But no! It is imposible he should."

"If it would *seriously* offend you, I should think it, indeed, impossible," observed Leslie.

"Offend!" replied Fanny. "I could never overlook such duplicity. Nor would Lady Ann and my guardian ever again countenance a man, who, contrary to my express declaration, has the insolence to speak, however indirectly, of one, to whose smallest favour he has, in fact, so few claims."

"Not one, by heaven!" ejaculated Leslie,

with strong emotion. "Indeed, I know not the man who could lay on the score of merit, to the favour of Miss Fitz-York."

Leslie's warmth, and the animation which sparkled in his eye, gave a momentary pleasure to our heroine. But her evil genius, in the ideal form of Philippa, interrupted every felicitous sensation; and, with a sigh of regret, that her wayward heart was bestowed on one, whose best affections were in the possession of another, she turned away, and pursued her solitary walk.

Mean while, Leslie and the widow, who could on no rational ground account for her abrupt departure, continued the conversation; the one believing she repented her premature, but not less binding, engagement with Corbett; the other, positively asserting, that no such engagement existed, or ever would exist.

Fanny had reached the extent of the shady avenue, and was turning to retrace her steps, when voices in an adjoining walk disturbed her reverie. The person then speaking was evidently Philippa; and, to convince her of

her entire forgiveness, she was meditating a junction, when the hated accents of Corbett struck upon her ear, and set aside her intention. Instead of joining them, her only wish now was to remain unnoticed; and stopping a moment to observe which way they bent their course, that her own movements might be governed by theirs, she heard Philippa say, "I have no fears on my own account. I know Leslie too well to doubt either his honour or his love; but I cannot help feeling for Miss Fitz-York's youth and unprotected situation. Lady Ann was highly blameable in trusting so young and vain a girl to her own inexperience; though her motive for sending her here may be easily accounted for. She would have no objection to ally her own decayed nobility to a dukedom; and the daughter plays her part in the mother's ambitious project to admiration. But all her arts, and she began to practise them from the moment she entered the house, will avail nothing with Leslie; he may pity her, and who can help it? but his

attachment to me commenced in our childhood, and has increased with our years."

Fanny's feelings, during this artful speech, may be better conceived than expressed. Was it to be endured, that Lady Ann—the best of women—the most exemplary of parents—should be supposed capable of laying plans for her daughter's elevation? And that *that* daughter should become an object of pity, not merely to Miss Heathcote, but to Leslie himself? There was distraction in the thought! Young Talbot's late conduct, then, was the result of compassion. He felt for the presumed love-sick girl, and took that method of crushing her hopes. Pride was Fanny's ruling passion. Not that pride which rendered Lord Milford and Lady Mountcastle so unamiable; but the pride of conscious integrity—the pride of virtue and hereditary honour.—These swelled her young heart, and elevated her form, until it became almost as majestic as her mother's would have been on a similar occasion.

The precious pair, having distilled their poison into Fanny's ear, walked away at the

close of Philippa's speech; but the victim of their deceptive arts remained riveted to the spot. Her first determination was to write to Lady Ann to recall her; but in so doing, she must explain her reasons; and that, compassion to her mother's feelings would for ever prevent. Besides, the Duke, the the Duchess, and their lovely daughters' kindness and attention merited all her praise; and whilst her society contributed to their happiness, it would be ungrateful to withdraw herself voluntarily. "No," she continued mentally, "I will remain, and convince the misjudging lovers, that I am neither a vain nor a weak girl! That my beloved mother has formed no plans of ambition! And that the Duke of Newland's heir is not more decidedly indifferent towards Fanny Fitz-York, than she———" Here a deep sigh interrupted the current of her thoughts; but it seemed to afford relief to her oppressed mind; and she concluded her cogitations with a firm determination to think no more of Leslie.

CHAP. X.

THE RACES—LITTLE WATTY—AND A WELCOME ARRIVAL!

WHEN Fanny entered the drawing-room, she found her noble hosts *tête-à-tête*; and answered their kind enquiries, by an assurance that music, if their Graces were so disposed, would complete her cure. The proposal was too agreeable to be disputed, and the trio were deeply engaged in a glee, when the rest of the family dropped in. Leslie drew near to our heroine, and as the last note died away, said, in a low voice, "How good and amiable you are, to sacrifice your own ease to the happiness of others."

These few words applied so peculiarly to Fanny's late feelings, that she overlooked their real meaning; and turning hastily, was

going to disavow *all sacrifice*, when Corbett, who had stationed himself on the other side, added, "Every one must yield to Miss Fitz-York in the art of pleasing."

"The *art* of pleasing!" said Philippa. "A good distinction, Corbett. But give *me* the woman who is pleasing *without art*."

Fanny felt the implication; but, conscious of not deserving it, fixed her penetrating eye upon the speaker, whose countenance fell beneath her gaze. Corbett saw the look, and confessing its power, replied, "Really, Miss Heathcote, you have strained my words into a meaning they were never meant to convey; nor is it possible they can be so construed when applied to Miss Fitz-York."

"Bravo!" said Sir Laurence.

"Bravissimo!" added Lillyman.

"What are you all about!" asked pretty Miss Auburn, advancing.

"Aye,—What are you all about, good folks?" echoed Mrs. Bloomfield.

"We were speaking of the Arts, madam," answered Corbett.

"Is that all?" said the widow. "I vow,

from the rapturous exclamations of the Baronet, and his no less scientific friend, I thought your subject had been cookery, or cosmetics. Pray which of the Arts were *they* applauding?"

"The art of pleasing," said Philippa.

"Have they any pretensions?" asked the teasing widow. "I should be glad of information in the affirmative, for the novelty of the thing; for I never yet discovered any. Miss Fitz-York, you ran away from us this evening. No appointment, I hope, with any of these gallants?"

"My dear madam," replied Fanny, smiling, "you do not *hope*, you are *certain*."

"Yes! I *am* certain, that *my* beau wished the *old* woman at Jericho, that he might follow the *young* one."

Fanny, to put an end to the conversation, struck up a favourite dance, which first set the heads of the company in motion, and afterwards their heels; for they formed into couples and danced away their animosity.

Burford races, which the Duke always made a point of attending, were drawing

near; and, as Fanny had never been present at an amusement of that nature, many new scenes were anticipated, which she hoped might draw her thoughts from a subject, it was no less her interest than her inclination to abandon. This was a difficult task, whilst each hour presented Leslie to her view, adorned with every manly grace and virtue. He was one of those characters who shine with resplendent lustre in a domestic circle. To the Duke and Duchess he was dutiful and attentive; to his cousins, affectionate and polite; to the household, considerate and kind; to the visitors, uniformly assiduous to conciliate and amuse; and, surely, no person possessed that art in greater perfection than Leslie Talbot; for in addition to his talents as a man of genius, strongly supported by education and travel, he attached a sprightliness of manner, which rendered even juvenile amusements interesting, and could descend to playfulness with a grace few of his compeers could equal.

To see him every day, and all day long; to hear the dulcet harmony of his voice—

never so perfectly sweet as when addressing herself—without appreciating talents so exclusively his own,—would have betrayed a want of discernment, an indifference to merit, which falls to the lot only of those who want sense to distinguish perfection, or are too selfish to allow it to any but themselves. But Leslie was now a forbidden good; and it was her duty to struggle against a partiality, which could produce nothing but misery.

Lady Ann had sedulously warned her against that enervating weakness, which some young girls encourage, to the destruction of health and morals. She had been taught, that to *will* and to *do* were synonymous. Fanny had found this doctrine experimentally just, as far as experience had hitherto reached; and, if to *resolve* be to *accomplish* in small things, why not in all?

This style of argument will be scouted by those damsels deeply read in romance, who chuse constancy for their motto, and are ready to sacrifice every thing to love. But Fanny's education, and the maxims of her

mother had stamped her, not only a reasonable, but a reasoning creature; and this reasoning taught her, that unattainable good, if not viewed through the medium of prudence, is, in fact, evil in disguise, and will, soon or late, crush the being who does not flee before it.

During the race-week, Leslie would, doubtless, have engagements, which would divide, if they did not estrange him from the family party; and at the end of that period she hoped to receive a summons from her beloved mother; to whom, and Rosette, in the sweet retirement of Tremorne, she looked for the restoration of that peace, her visit into Oxfordshire had for a time destroyed.

The carriages were at the door to convey them to Burford Downs, when a difficulty arose about the order of their going. Fanny had previously petitioned Mrs. Bloomfield to permit her to occupy the vacant seat in her chariot; but this his Grace positively forbade. "What would the admirers of beauty say," he observed, "if they knew the flower of

our party was cooped up in a close carriage? I am too proud of such an assemblage of youth and loveliness to conceal one of you. There are two open carriages, and I would wish them occupied by——let me see, how many young folks have I? There are four of my own family, Miss Fitz-York and Miss Auburn make six, you three gentlemen figure as equestrians, I believe, so there will be four for the landau, and if Miss Fitz-York would grace Leslie's curricle——"

"If Miss Fitz-York would so far honour me," interrupted young Talbot, his whole countenance glowing with the idea.

"Since you will not permit her to go with me," said Mrs. Bloomfield, "I am sure, Fanny, you can have no objection to his Grace's arrangement."

"If Miss Heathcote would permit me to take her seat in the landau," replied Fanny, modestly, "I think it would be more *proper*,—I am *sure* it would be more *agreeable*."

Leslie sighed as he offered his hand to Philippa; but the Duke again interfering, asked Miss Auburn if *she* had any *particular ob-*

jection to his *nephew's society?* "If you have, my dear, copy Miss Fitz-York's *candour*; for I should be sorry to force any young lady's inclination; though there are few, I am proud to say, who would not think themselves *honoured* by his attention." His Grace spoke with an air of pique, for Talbot was his delight, and he thought no young woman, however exalted her rank, but ought to be gratified by his notice.

Little Auburn, with a dimpled smile, ascended the curricle—Philippa, highly mortified, seated herself by Fanny in the barouche, opposite the two Ladies Talbot—and Mrs. Bloomfield, deprived of her companion, preferred a seat in the Duke's coach, in which likewise Mr. Crayon the artist was accommodated. The races were well attended. All the beauty and fashion of Oxfordshire, and some of the surrounding counties, graced the Downs, and our heroine found much to admire in a scene so animating; for every body seemed happy, and happiness, or rather its semblance, is contagious. The Duke's resentment ceased, the moment he had given

it utterance; and as the carriages drew up close to each other, they conversed with ease and freedom. All the neighbouring nobility paid their respects; and Fanny could not help wondering, that amidst such a motley concourse of people, she should not recognise one familiar countenance; without immediately considering that her society had been too circumscribed to admit a probability of meeting one of the few at Burford races.

The Duke had secured apartments at the head Inn, where they dined, and in the evening, all was bustle and preparation for the ball. Leslie was too much hurt by Fanny's pointed refusal in the morning, to subject himself to the like mortification. Accordingly he led out the pretty Auburn, whilst our heroine was under the disagreeable necessity of accepting the offered hand of Corbett, or sitting still the whole evening; and though the latter would have been highly preferable, she wanted courage to encounter the raillery and animadversions, such a singularity would have drawn upon her. The Ladies Albina and Sidney were taken out by the two sons

of a neighbouring Peer, and Philippa fell to the lot of the soulless Sir Laurence. Lillyman, thus left to seek a stranger, picked up a little lively brunette, whose tongue kept pace with her heels; and 'ere they had reached the bottom of the set, she had talked and danced herself completely out of breath.

Fanny, on the contrary, was spiritless and lost in thought. Leslie had never addressed her since the morning; but why he should be displeased at a circumstance which involved *his* happiness equally with *her* peace she could not imagine. "Had I not made that a prior consideration," she continued mentally, "I should not have proposed Philippa, in preference to Miss Auburn, as the companion of his drive; and surely it was not my fault that the Duke disappointed him any more than I could be answerable for his Grace's original proposal. I had no desire to usurp another's rights; and though Miss Heathcote taxed me with *vanity* and *art*; they shall never be exerted to her detriment, or to engraft *Lady Ann Fitz-York's*

decayed nobility upon the *noble stock* of *New-land*."

These, and many more unpleasant reflections crowded upon her mind to the destruction of every thing like pleasure; and the calm, peaceful years spent at dear Tremorne, passed in review before her, like the ghosts of departed happiness.

At length, the first two dances ended; and to avoid being taken out for the next set, she sought her Grace and Mrs. Bloomfield in an adjacent apartment. But fresh mortification awaited her, for crossing the passage she encountered ensign Gaskell; the identical little Watty, whose juvenile tricks, and more adult actions, had left a very unfavourable impression upon her mind. Modesty was never one of Gaskell's virtues, but a year spent amongst the most dissolute of his corps, for no man of sense or refinement would associate with him, had made him more vain, more impertinent, more presuming. Fanny would have passed him, but the little insolent, seeing her apparently without a party, seized both her hands, and

with a rude stare, congratulated himself on thus fortunately meeting a near neighbour. "I have been peeping about," he continued, "for a face that I knew; when the handsomest girl in the place pops upon me, in time I hope to begin the next dance."

Fanny vainly endeavoured to release her hands; his grasp was too powerful for all her efforts to resist; and the proud disdain which animated her features, he either did not, or would not understand. When however he mentioned her so unceremoniously, as his partner in the dance, she felt all the dignity of the Grosvenors rush into her veins; and Lady Mountcastle herself, could not have looked with more haughty superiority. "Mr. Gaskell," she replied, "the rude and vulgar familiarity of your words and actions, I am not *now* to *learn*; though I scarcely suspected I should again have been the *object* of them. I am sorry, for your worthy father's sake, that years and a knowledge of the world, have not corrected those offensive traits of character, which marked your boyish days; and must beg leave to observe,

that a near, and intimate acquaintance, could scarcely warrant the freedom of your manners; but that from an almost stranger, they are equally indecorous and repulsive. I hope I am now at liberty to join my friends; if you decide otherwise, I must have recourse, however unpleasantly, to that protection, you will not *dare* dispute."

"What! you have not forgot your heroics, my dainty fair one;" cried he with a sneer: "but Harry Tudor is not now within call, and if he were, I am by this time above a match for him. We gentlemen of the army are up to boxing as well as the broad sword; and woe betide that slim spark, if ever he comes across me again. But I hear the fiddles, and I am sure you wont be so unneighbourly as to refuse my hand. I'm a prime dancer now; we gentlemen of the army are in full practice, and I should not wonder if you are the envy of every girl in the room." "I do not wish on any occasion to excite envy; but in the present instance, it would be attended with a

mortification I cannot encounter; so pray release me."

"Is your hand engaged?" said Gaskell. An affirmative was on the tip of her tongue, but accustomed from infancy, never to swerve from the strict line of truth, she could not reconcile a departure from it, even to save herself from mortification. She therefore, reluctantly, answered in the negative, at the same time adding, "she did not mean to join the next set."

"What you are tired are you? we gentlemen of the army are never tired with dancing, and I am at your call whenever you think proper to command me."

Fanny glad to be released, and now first seeing the impropriety of leaving the ball-room alone, glided to the back of her Grace's chair; who, with the Duke, Mrs. Bloomfield, and an elderly gentleman she had frequently seen at the Abbey were engaged in a rubber.

After the usual questions, Fanny was asked the reason of her idleness? "I hope," added the Duke "there is no scarcity of beaux?"

"No, my Lord Duke, I believe not," replied Fanny. "But the quiet of this apartment is a great relief, after the distracting noise of the ball-room."

"Wonders never cease!" exclaimed the Widow. "Since when, my dear Fanny, has a ball-room been a scene of distraction? Come, be honest, confess, you have had a disagreeable partner."

"I danced with Captain Corbett, madam."

"Duchess," asked Mrs. Bloomfield, "can you tell from Miss Fitz-York's answer, whether she was pleasantly situated in the dance, or the contrary?"

"Not from her words," replied her Grace; "but one may make a shrewd guess from her leaving the ball-room at this critical moment—"

"Well!" said the widow.

"That she was so delighted with the Captain, no one was thought worthy of succeeding him."

"Is her Grace right, Fanny?"

"Quite the contrary."

"Quite the contrary means, that you were

so disgusted, you want courage to make a second trial."

"Is there no medium between delight and disgust?" asked Fanny. "None," answered the Widow, "that should induce a lively young woman to prefer our society to the mirth-inspiring sound of the tabor."

"Oh yes! one."

"Name it."

"That your society is more charming than music;—more enlivening than the dance;—and more improving than any thing I have heard in the ball-room."

Then perhaps you intend to remain with this charming—enlivening—improving party?" said the Widow. "If so, I hope the Duke has made his will, for he may expect a dozen challenges at least, from men who will naturally lay your preference to the door of his attractions." "If Miss Fitz-York allows me the honor of being her champion," said his Grace, "it will be my pride to defend her with all the skill I am master of."

"Your Grace is witness," said Fanny,

addressing the Duchess, "to this gallant declaration, which I shall certainly call into action the first favourable opportunity."

Sir Laurence with his usual listlessness strolled into the room, deputed by Lady Sidney, to enquire the motive of our heroine's desertion; and to request, on his own behalf, the honour of her hand for the two succeeding dances.

The Duke saw dissatisfaction in Fanny's countenance, but having no idea that it proceeded from a dread of being claimed by Gaskell, naturally attributed it to her dislike of the present offer; and to release her from it, replied "when Miss Fitz-York is again disposed to join the dance, she is engaged to me, Sir Laurence. 'Tis so understood I believe my dear." "Certainly. With pleasure, if your Grace wishes it." For Gaskell she knew would not contend against so powerful a competitor; and the rubber being finished, Sir Laurence was prevailed upon to take the Duke's seat, whilst he led his fair partner to the ball room. Couples were forming for the next set as they entered; and Watty no

sooner saw our heroine, than he brushed up to her, and familiarly enquired if she was ready? "For what?" enquired his Grace.

"For a *caper*, *old boy*. The pretty Fanny is engaged to me." The Duke's enquiring countenance was fixed upon our heroine, when the coxcomb added, "*You* don't presume to dance, I hope, with those gouty legs?"

"Where would be the presumption, if this lady be satisfied?"

"That lady, sir, I told you before, is engaged to me, sir." said Watty, scrutinizing his antagonist, who from his age he thought he might safely bully.

"No, sir," said the Duke calmly, "she has promised her hand to me, and you will pardon me, if I do not easily relinquish it."

"And who the d—l are you, Sir."

The foregoing part of this dialogue had been unheard, except by the party interested. But Gaskell's last words were uttered with such loud defiance, that several gentlemen rushed to the spot, amongst the rest Leslie.

"For heaven's sake, my dear sir," said he, "what is the matter?"

"Oh! nothing; only this young soldier wants to wrest my partner from me, on the plea that old men have no business to dance. But unless Miss Fitz-York forbid it, I am determined to keep my post, and not to be bullied out of my right."

"Bullied, Sir!" echoed Walter, "Such another word, and I'll pin you to the wall. We gentlemen of the army are not to be insulted with impunity."

"Do you know who you are speaking to?" said a by-stander, in a low voice. "Yes," replied Gaskell in a threatening tone, and not clearly comprehending the question; "I am speaking to that little old man, whose dancing days are long gone by."

"You are speaking thus insolently," said Leslie, "to the Duke of Newland; and unless you ask his Grace's pardon immediately, you must answer it to me."

Gaskell's countenance, before red with passion, now became pale through fear. To affront a Duke was, in his estimation, little

short of high-treason—a crime never to be forgiven. But when he understood from Leslie's words, that begging pardon was all he required, he stammered out an apology, couched in terms the most servile and humiliating, in the midst of which the Duke and his friends walked away, and Watty, covered with shame and confusion, mounted his horse, and left the gaieties of Burford to those better calculated to shine in the vortex of fashion and good breeding.

Fanny having explained the cause of the foregoing scene, added, "you see 'tis dangerous, my Lord Duke to make rash vows. When you engaged yourself as my champion, there was little probability of your valour being so soon called into action; but if *you* can pardon the origin of all this bustle, I shall never forgive *myself* for subjecting your grace to insult and impertinence."

"My dear child," replied the Duke, "I feel no anger against the boy; and honestly confess I should, at his age, have struggled hard to retain my pretensions to so lovely a partner. I am only vexed that Leslie should

give the business a consequence it by no means deserved, by his interference.

"My dear Sir! could I have done less when I heard you insulted?" "Yes, Talbot, you should have looked upon the lad with the contempt I did; and that would have induced you to do nothing but laugh at the little warrior's puerile passion."

As the company had by this time formed into dancing order, the Duke led his lovely partner to the top of the room. His Grace had formerly been celebrated at St. James's, as the finest dancer, and the best-bred man of his day. Age had rendered his limbs less elastic, but he might still have vied with many a younger man; and Fanny moved with a grace and vivacity so enchanting—so different from her former essay—that Philippa, as she passed, congratulated her partner on having "warmed the *clod* into *life.*"

The Duke frowned, and would have shown greater marks of disapprobation, had not Leslie at that moment presented his hand in the figure; when the frown was converted

into a smile so gracious, that its influence was felt by our heroine. "Am not I the envy of the room?" asked the Duke.

"I am glad," replied Leslie, "to see you happy, my Lord."

"But you don't envy me?"

"How can I, with so fair a partner of my own?" The genuine politeness of this reply satisfied all parties; and as Fanny declined every succeeding offer, she was not sorry when the carriages were announced to convey them back to the Abbey.

The following day, Leslie, without assigning a reason, declared his intention of joining the Equestrian party. Philippa had built her hopes upon being his companion in the curricle, from an idea that he would not like to be seen two succeeding days with the same lady; and this unlooked for determination mortified her to the quick; for was it not done with a view to avoid her company? There was madness in the thought, and the little syren, who had defeated her sanguine expectations of rank and precedence, for happiness was never brought into the scale—

become an object of confirmed antipathy. Yet so perfect was she in the art of hypocrisy, that no one suspected her capable of more than a little mischievous raillery, and that Fanny shared in common with others.

The Duke, with whom Leslie's will was a law, made no objection to this new arrangement; but requested the honour of driving our heroine in the forsaken curricle? This she frankly acceded too, and found her consequence not a little heightened, by the flattering distinction. On the preceding day; many of both sexes fixed their confident eyes upon her, and seemed to think there was merit in staring down a *nobody*; but the Duke's flattering attention at the ball, and the distinguished station she now held, raised the nobody into somebody of vast importance in the eye of fashion. The gentlemen crowded round her, and the ladies stopped their carriages, under pretence of paying their respects to the Duke, but in fact to obtain a nearer view of his companion. Fanny felt her own importance—and what girl of her age, who knew she was

claiming no consequence that did not by birth belong to her, would have done otherwise?

Leslie too, laying aside the distance and reserve of the foregoing day, never quitted her side; and set an example of ease and freedom, it was impossible not to follow. The conversation was lively and animated, as in the early days of their acquaintance; Philippa's claims were forgotten, or if remembered, it was accompanied with a doubt of their reality; and the humiliating terms in which she had spoken of herself, and her revered parent, lost much of their poignancy, from a consciousness that they were totally unfounded. In fact, from one cause or other, she was in such perfect harmony of spirits, that every thing disagreeable was banished, and she determined firmly to support herself under undeserved calumny. A concert finished the day, and at an early hour they were again set down at the Abbey.

The next morning Philippa followed Leslie out of the breakfast room, and in the gen-

tlest accents, hoped he would not go to Burford again on horseback?

"Why do you hope so, Philippa?"

"Because I am sick of a female party, and should like to accompany you in the curricle."

"I thank you for the honour you would confer, but his grace enjoyed the open carriage so much yesterday, that I fancy he intends an encore.

"Indeed! And with the same party?"

"Doubtless."

"That girl has art enough to wheedle the Duke out of his senses."

"If you mean Miss Fitz-York, this is a point upon which we shall never agree; therefore, to prevent irritation in both parties, I wish you a good morning.

The cavalcade reached Burford in the same order as before, and were turning on to the downs, when a splendid barouche, four in hand, dashed past them. Neither Leslie nor the Duke knew to whom it belonged, and the rest of the gentlemen were in the rear with the other carriages; but ere they

had time to express curiosity, it faced about, when Fanny recognized the well-known features of Sir Herbert Huntley.

A joyful exclamation burst from the lips of each; and, drawing up, the Baronet expressed his delight at the unexpected meeting. To Fanny it conveyed a sensation equally pleasurable of which her expressive countenance gave ample testimony, and presented a fine contrast to the misery of disappointed hope exhibited by Leslie. The gay, elegant Sir Herbert Huntley, was the rival then he had to dread, and not Corbett; who, poor fellow! was in a situation not less pitiable than himself.

The Duke interrupted this train of thinking by reminding Fanny that an introduction was customary. "But do not hurry yourself, my dear," he continued, "it will be time enough when your excessive pleasure has abated."

Our heroine blushed at this justly provoked reproof, and replied, "Indeed, I fear I have behaved unpardonably; but the joy of seeing a highly-valued friend, brought past scenes

so forcibly to my recollection—scenes, in which my dear mother, and the loved companion of my early days participated, that form and etiquette were for the moment banished. But now your grace has kindly recalled my wandering senses, I shall take pleasure in introducing Sir Herbert Huntley to the Duke of Newland. Mr. Talbot is I believe an old acquaintance."

The duke with a good-humoured smile presented his hand, but Leslie merely noticed him by a formal, distant bow; and when the carriages separated was silent and abstracted. Whilst Fanny, with much native simplicity, recounted her first meeting with Sir Herbert, the progress of their acquaintance, and the high opinion her friends entertained of his worth. "I have heard him reported," said the Duke, "as the best of sons, perhaps Lady Ann Fitz-York intends to honor him with that title." "The title of Son?" asked Fanny smiling; "Oh no! Sir Herbert's affections are otherwise disposed of."

"Are you *sure* of that?" enquired Leslie, speaking for the first time since the Baronet's

approach. Our heroine stared, but made no reply; when he continued, "I beg your pardon, Miss Fitz-York, for doubting your word; but really the assertion came at a moment when I was so entirely unprepared for it—it came I say—when I was thinking of something so opposite, that I was not aware of the strength of my expression. Sir Herbert Huntley, I am told, is not only the most exemplary of sons, but the best of brothers, and I shall be proud to rank him amongst my particular friends."

Sir Herbert, in making the circuit of the course, was passing her Grace's carriage, when Mrs. Bloomfield, putting forth her head, bawled out "What Huntley! My noble Charioteer! Is that you?"

"It is, my dear widow! and never more happy to encounter Mrs. Bloomfield than at the present moment." Whilst he was paying his respects to the duchess, Leslie, who had seen him stop the carriage, and wished to make amends for his former slight, rode up, and with much politeness brought his grace's request that he would join their dinner

party." "Your company Sir Herbert," he added, "will be esteemed a favour by us all." The Baronet felt no small disgust at Leslie's former distance; but the trouble he had unnecessarily taken, shewed such a wish to conciliate, that the invitation was frankly accepted.

CHAP. XI.

AN UNEXPECTED MEETING, AND A JOURNEY.

AT dinner the widow was uncommonly loquacious, which was generally the signal for taciturnity, to those who dreaded her lash. In fact, she was almost tired of bestowing correction, where there was so little hope of amendment; and for several days had listened to the folly of certain individuals in silence; but Sir Herbert's arrival threw variety into the party, and raised her spirits above par. "Pray Baronet," said she, "where have you been vegetating since the summer solstice commenced?"

"At Rose Mount," he replied, "with my mother and sister."

"Very proper, and very dutiful," observed the Widow. "Were you merely a family party?"

"Oh no! We had several visitors?"

"Sensible people, or simpletons?"

"Madam!"

"I mean could they talk upon rational subjects, or was all their information confined to the *Kitchen?*"

"I declare, Widow, your discourse does not meet my comprehension."

"I am very unfortunate in my mode of expression to-day. Sir Laurence, can you elucidate my meaning? Or you, Mr. Lillyman? You are both gentlemen of *reading*, but whether you prefer *Betty Raffald*, or *Hannah Glass*, I have not yet been able to discover."

Miss Auburn, finding neither of the gentlemen disposed to answer, enquired what subject those ladies treated upon? and whether they belonged to the blue Stockings?

"They discuss subjects of infinite importance to lovers of good eating;" replied Mrs. Bloomfield, "though I do not think they were ever initiated into the society you speak of; but these gentlemen can establish that point better than I. What say you, Sir Laurence!"

"Nothing, madam."

"Mr. Lillyman, will you elucidate?"

"Upon my word, madam, replied the Divine, "this is a subject so much beneath the attention of well-bred people, that—really madam"—"That—really, Sir"—interrupted the widow, I knew we should agree at last. Did not I always say that culinary discussions were beneath the attention of—not *well bred* only—but *sensible* people. Pray, Sir Herbert, when did you see Lord Moseley? I hope he has quite recovered from the effects of his accident?"

"I hope so," replied the Baronet; "but I fancy I have scarcely seen him since you did."

"What accident?" enquired his Grace.

"Only a fall from his horse, my Lord Duke," replied Sir Herbert.

"That was the report in circulation," said Leslie; "but I have reason to think his wound arose from a duel."

"Indeed!" cried the Baronet, looking at Corbett; "I wonder who could circulate

such a report. Do you know, Captain Corbett?"

"Why do you apply particularly to me, Sir Herbert?" asked the Captain.

"At a more convenient time I may explain," replied the Baronet.

A duel, unattended with serious consequences, would have passed unnoticed by Fanny; but when Sir Herbert questioned Corbett so closely, it occurred to her, that the reported accident happened immediately subsequent to the birth-day; and an idea of the most horrible kind took possession of her. To be, though innocently, the occasion of a quarrel, was painful to her upright mind; but when to that was added sanguinary warfare—a meeting, in which the life of one or both might have been sacrificed, it occasioned a faintness so oppressive, that she was obliged to retire to an open window. Leslie and Sir Herbert joined her, and recommended a walk in the garden, as a means of counteracting the excessive heat of the room. Fanny smiled an affirmative,

and, inviting Mrs. Bloomfield to join the party, they sallied forth.

Whilst this scene was acting, Philippa observed, "What a blessing it is to be possessed of fine feelings! Miss Fitz-York, doubtless, fancies herself the cause of this whispered duel; and as Captain Corbett seems to be considered as a party, I think he has great reason to exult in the young lady's partiality."

No one appeared to notice this sarcasm, and the ladies soon afterwards retired to prepare for the evening.

The widow receiving a hint that Fanny wished for a few minutes conversation with Huntley, took Leslie's arm, and drawing him to a distant part of the garden, our heroine, with much anxiety, enquired if a duel had indeed followed the dispute in the palace? Sir Herbert, totally unprepared for a question of this nature, knew not what to reply. His word had been pledged to preserve the secret; but thus interrogated, he must either forfeit that, or be guilty, by denying it, of a gross and palpable falsehood; and as the

business appeared to have got wind, doubtless through the vanity of Corbett, he conceived himself no longer bound to preserve, what the indiscretion of others had divulged. Accordingly he detailed the rencontre, and its consequences; at the same time assuring his auditor, that the meeting would, probably, have taken place independent of her, as Moseley's extreme irritability on the birthday, took its rise from a cause remote and unconnected.

Fanny felt much relieved by this communication, and being informed that Lady Ann and Rosette would probably be in Devonshire in the course of a few days, as the last letter he received had mentioned the expected dissolution of Mr. O'Brian, she gave a sigh to the premature fate of a man, who, during their short acquaintance, had, in his relative situation, treated her beloved mother with a kindness and consideration, her own immediate connections had invariably withheld. Leslie and the widow now joined them. The countenance of the former betrayed a restless curiosity he vainly

strove to conceal; but when Fanny announced to Mrs. Bloomfield her expectation of a speedy summons to join Lady Ann at Tremorne, he looked at the Baronet as the harbinger of tidings the most bitter and unexpected; without considering that our heroine had made a much longer stay at Newland than was at first intended.

Fanny could not avoid noticing the sorrow her communication caused; and to hide the sympathy it awakened, stopped to pluck a rose. Leslie loitered too, and in mournful accents, said, "Are we, indeed, so soon to lose you?"

"Soon," echoed Fanny, without moving her eyes from the flower. "My visit has been protracted beyond what friendship or intimacy could warrant; and I am indebted to the forbearing kindness of her Grace for permitting me to trespass so long upon her hospitality."

"Her Grace, in common with the rest of her family, will have cause to regret your visit, since, as Miss Fitz-York, it may never be repeated."

"If the Duchess permits a repetition in any moderate time, it will be under no other name, rest assured."

"Indeed? I thought—I understood—but, perhaps, I am outstepping the bounds of propriety, and prying into forbidden subjects."

"I have no secrets. Pray proceed. What did you understand?"

"That Captain Corbett was the envied, the happy man, whom choice, and the consent of friends——"

"Corbett!" interrupted Fanny, amazement visibly painted on her countenance. "The last man in existence whom I should choose; and be assured, he has no exclusive interest with my friends. I thought I said as much, when the same subject was hinted by Mrs. Bloomfield."

"You did. But my understanding was then blinded by circumstances and events of so puzzling a nature, that I interpreted your words very differently. If I now construe them aright, and of that I cannot doubt, Corbett is a wretch—a defamer of inno-

cence—and ought to be hooted from civilized society."

"Nay—now you alarm me. Have your words any reference to me?"

"They have And I am sure you will not think me impertinently inquisitive if I ask, whether you ever honoured Corbett with a letter?"

"Never."

"And yet I saw the cover of one directed in your hand."

Fanny instantly explained the circumstance; at the same time requesting Leslie would not interfere in a business Lady Ann and her guardian were so fully competent to manage. "Without your full permission," he replied, "I shall certainly not presume to take up the cause; but to reward my forbearance, may I request the honour of your hand for the first set?"

"Since you make that a condition, it is granted."

By this time they had reached the house; but found the dining-room vacated, and Fanny, blushing as she looked at her watch,

wondered how moments, which appeared so short, should have left her such little time for decoration.

Our heroine had been early taught, that time unnecessarily devoted to the toilette, was, in fact, wasted; but this day that good maxim escaped her. Her curls were adjusted over and over again, and still she thought they might be placed to greater advantage. Another attempt was made with no better success; and, after a much longer time than usual, and infinitely more pains, she fancied her appearance altogether unfavourable; and joined her friends less satisfied with herself than at any former period. This, however, was by no means a general sentiment; the Duchess complimented her on the excessive neatness and propriety of her appearance; and Mrs. Bloomfield could not avoid drawing comparisons much to her advantage.

It had been previously agreed to attend the theatre before they proceeded to the ball-room. Fanny was first handed out of the carriage, and as she waited for her party in the box-lobby, two females, dressed evi-

dently to attract notice, brushed past her; in one of whom she recognized Julia Cavendish! Drawing Sir Herbert aside, she whispered a discovery, and enquired what steps it would be proper to pursue?

The Duchess and her train passed to their box whilst this confidential communication was made; Leslie alone patiently awaiting its termination, and wondering at the occasion. At length he heard the Baronet say, "Leave the business to my discretion, and do not by your words or looks, betray what it is so much our interest to conceal. Mr. Talbot waits to conduct you; behave as if nothing had happened, and depend upon my caution." At the conclusion of this sentence he presented Fanny's hand to Leslie, and bowing, left them. "I am afraid," said Talbot, as they proceeded, "something unpleasant has occurred. Can I be useful?"

"You are very good; but Sir Herbert is fully adequate to the business in question. All I have to request is, that no notice may be taken of any thing that has happened,

since the happiness of several may otherwise be involved."

"Since I am trusted so far, I wish I were thought worthy of knowing more. Not from curiosity, believe me, that were a despicable motive; but from a fear that so *very young* a man as Sir Herbert Huntley may not be the most *eligible confidante* Miss Fitz-York could choose."

"So, because I have, unadvisedly as you suppose, trusted one young man, you think I should mend the matter by admitting another to my confidence. No, no! If I have done one imprudent thing, I will not add to it by another of the same complexion"

Lillyman at that moment came in search of the trio: but finding only two, and those in earnest conversation, he begged pardon for interrupting their interesting *tête-à-tête*, and was again retiring; when Fanny and Leslie joined him, and they entered the box together. Every eye was turned with curiosity upon our heroine, and the consciousness that there was something to conceal,

gave an embarrassment to her manner quite unusual. Before the farce began all the fashionables forsook the theatre, and the ball-room exhibited more beauty and splendour than on the former night.

Still Sir Herbert was absent, and a thousand questions poured from different quarters to ascertain the cause. These interrogations were considerately answered by Leslie, to lead suspicion from glancing at his fair partner; and thus he became a voluntary party in the mystery, though what that mystery was, he knew not, and would have given the world to fathom.

The second dance concluded, and Fanny refused every offer to join a fresh set, having promised her hand to the Baronet. Still he came not; and the gentlemen who had been mortified by her avowed pre-engagement, wondered who the insensible being could be, who, on any pretence, would neglect so fascinating an object.

She was in earnest conversation with the Duke, when a tall, elegant stranger entered the room, and, after speaking to the Master

of the Ceremonies, advanced to the sofa on which they were seated. "Have I the honour," said he, gracefully bowing, "to address Miss Fitz-York?" Our heroine answered in the affirmative, when drawing a note from his pocket, he presented it, and retired. The direction was in the hand-writing of Sir Herbert, and, bowing to his Grace, she read as follows:

"MY DEAR MADAM,

"I HAVE only time to say, that I have obtained possession of my charge, and am this moment setting off for Devonshire. No plea but humanity could force me to relinquish the honour and pleasure of my engagement this evening; but if I may be allowed to recommend my friend, Colonel Parke, you will have no cause to regret the absence of

"Your truly devoted friend
"and Servant,
"HERBERT HUNTLEY."

The gentleman again advanced, and hoped he was saved the unpleasant necessity of being his own herald.

"Sir Herbert Huntley," she replied, "has made honourable mention of Colonel Parke, whom I, consequently, make no scruple of introducing to his Grace the Duke of Newland." The customary compliments passed; he begged to trespass still further, by requesting she would honour a stranger and a soldier with her hand. "It is sometimes, my dear madam," he continued, "inconvenient to have a good character, and you owe the boldness of this request to my friend, Sir Herbert's animated account of your goodness and condescension."

The dance was already begun; nevertheless she gave her hand to the gallant Colonel, and assuring his Grace that she would not suffer him to be long idle, they took their station at the bottom of the room. Leslie's attention had been wholly fixed upon the handsome stranger from his first appearance. He wondered who he could be, and how he should have had influence enough to obtain a boon so many had sued for in vain. The letter, too. Who could it come from? A thought at that moment shot like a bolt of

ice through his frame, and he felt convinced the dreadful summons was arrived, which would deprive Newland of its most precious ornament. This gentleman was, doubtless, a friend of Lady Ann's, or he would not have been honoured with the commission; and if so, her hand was not his for the evening only, but, probably, destined to bless him for ever.

These thoughts so entirely engaged him, that his partner thought it impossible he could be the gay, animated Leslie she had so much admired the preceding dance. Then he was all spirit and vivacity; now he was so abstracted—so unmindful of his duty, that the figure would frequently have been in confusion, but for her efforts to prevent it. At length they arrived at the bottom of the set, and as he was dancing with our heroine, he said, in a low voice, "I see the fatal mandate is come; but surely we are not to lose you so suddenly."

"If you mean the summons from Lady Ann, it is not arrived; and, perhaps, I may stay long enough to tire you all." Fanny

then introduced her partner, and spoke of him as the friend of Sir Hebert Huntley.

"Perhaps, then," said Leslie, "that dreaded letter was from the Baronet?"

"It was."

"Shall we see him here this evening?"

"I fancy he is on the road to Devonshire by this time." The figure prevented a continuation of the dialogue, and Leslie's partner had no further occasion to remind him of his duty.

Colonel Parke was the only son of a General of that name, and but lately returned from the East Indies. He and Sir Herbert, though there was a material difference in their ages, were old friends, and the accidental meeting was hailed with joy by both parties. The Baronet explained the necessity he was under of leaving Burford immediately, "which you will own, Parke, is no small mortification," he added, "when I assure you the handsomest and the best girl in England is waiting for me in the ball-room."

"*Could* not I be your *locum tenens*, Her-

bert?" asked the Colonel. "You may deliver a note from me, which will be no bad introduction; and your own address will do the rest."

"May a soldier venture to bestow his heart; with any chance of return? For though you speak like an *enthusiast*, 'tis not exactly the language of *love*."

"I am not in Miss Fitz-York's secrets, Colonel, and if I were, it would be the action of a scoundrel to betray them.

Colonel Parke tacitly confessed at the first glance, that Fanny's person was charming; but the unaffected ease and elegance of her manner—the mind which shone on every lineament of her countenance,—acted more forcibly upon his heart, than mere personal beauty. In a word, before the end of the two dances he found his imagination more sensibly affected, than it had ever been before, though English importations of youth and loveliness, had not been unfrequent during his residence in the east; but our soldier had too much delicacy to be ensnared by venal charms, or entrapped by those who

make a traffic of their beauty. The evening however closed, without any probability of renewing his acquaintance. The Duchess, under whose protection he understood Miss Fitz-York was now placed, gave him no invitation to Newland; and who her immediate connections were, or in what part of Britain they resided, he had no opportunity of enquiring.

The following morning, Sir Herbert's excessive rudeness was canvassed, and himself denounced by the major part of the company. Miss Fitz-York and Leslie were asked, if they would become responsible for his conduct, or had any thing to allege, why sentence of banishment should not be pronounced. Talbot promptly replied, "I have no hesitation in pronouncing Sir Herbert innocent of your charge. An unexpected, and urgent occasion, hurried him into Devonshire; that settled, I have no objection to be answerable for his appearance at Newland, when he will put his judges to the blush, for condemning him unheard." Fanny looked grateful for the promptitude

with which he had removed suspicion from herself; and it was decided by the Duke, that Sir Herbert's final sentence should stand over for a few days, in hope he would entirely set it aside by his appearance.

During this period, Philippa and Corbett held several consultations, in which the lady's bitterness and rancour were most conspicuous. Her rage at Leslie's undisguised partiality knew no bounds, nor did Corbett escape his share of blame. "With your personal endowments," she exclaimed, "you might with only a small share of perseverance, conquer the indifference of any *petty Miss* in the kingdom; but the fact is, Corbett, self is your idol; and I believe you think scarcely any girl worth the pains of a pursuit."

"What would you have me do—shall I run away with her?"

"That is a project easier to talk about than accomplish. Such adventures happen every day in Romances; but in real life, it is a thing next to impracticable. Then all our plots and plans, tending to estrange, and keep Leslie and the little witch asunder,

have only recoiled upon ourselves, and drawn them into a closer intimacy; from which I naturally conclude, that some explanation has taken place respecting your pretensions at least; for Fanny, to give every one their due, has too much delicacy to have introduced my name; and therefore she must yet conclude me a formidable rival, though Leslie's behaviour, certainly does not tend to confirm it."

"Nor, I am afraid, ever will."

"You don't know that. Only let me get her out of the house—'tis plain why she was sent here—and I think I can wheedle her Grace into my plans; whose power over the Duke and his nephew is unlimited."

The dinner bell broke up the consultation; and though nothing satisfactory had resulted, or was likely to ensue from the meeting, communication gives ease to the mind, and so far, this precious pair had profited by it.

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